

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO



3 1761 01733041 6



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation



Presented to the

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

by the

ONTARIO LEGISLATIVE
LIBRARY

1980



W. B. Baldwin

THE

PERIODICAL PRESS

OF

2964

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND:

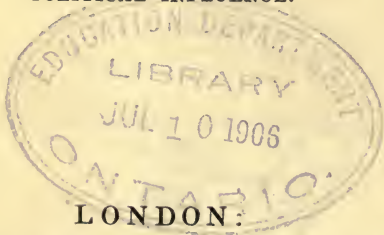
OR

AN INQUIRY INTO THE STATE OF THE

PUBLIC JOURNALS,

CHIEFLY AS REGARDS THEIR MORAL AND

POLITICAL INFLUENCE.



LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HURST, ROBINSON, & CO.

90 CHEAPSIDE, AND 8 PALL-MALL,

AND A. CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH.

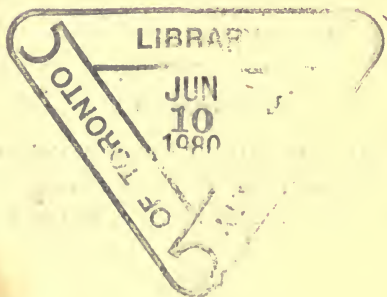
1824.

3296

LONDON

PRINTED BY S. AND R. BENTLEY, DORSET STREET.

PK
5117
P5



TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
F. J. ROBINSON, M. P.

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER,

&c. &c. &c.

THESE OBSERVATIONS ON
THE PERIODICAL PRESS
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM ARE RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBED.







SUMMARY OF CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.—The power of the Press.—Toleration.—Introduction into England of the art of printing.—Benefits of free discussion.—Conduct of Foreign Governments in regard to it.—Abortive Revolutions.—Licentiousness of the Press.—Laws enacted to restrain it. page 1

CHAPTER II.

The advantages of conflicting opinions.—Dissenters.—American Press.—Object of Ministers in taxing newspapers.—Impolicy of the measure.—Effects of the French Revolution on the lower classes of society in Britain.—The measures of Government accordingly.—Result of these measures. 17

CHAPTER III.

Constitutional Association.—Mistaken zeal of its members.—State of the Press in 1821.—Legitimate mode of punishing libel.—Liability of such institutions to abuse.—Proceedings of the Constitutional Association.—The result of them.—The consequences that would ensue were different parties to institute such associations for mutual protection. 30

CHAPTER IV.

Imposts on newspapers in Britain.—Stamp-duty.—Duty on advertisements.—Monopoly and popularity.—These the result of restrictions.—Effects of these restrictions on the public.—Mode of relief.—Propriety of extending the discussions of the Press.—The beneficial consequences page 46

CHAPTER V.

Advertisements.—Means of lowering their cost and increasing their number.—Groundless fears of advertisements becoming libels.—State of the American Press in this respect.—The frauds, puffs, quackeries, and impositions of the English Press.—Means of amelioration.—Mode of reducing the tax without lessening the revenue.—Advantages that would result therefrom. 57

CHAPTER VI.

Newspaper Press in Ireland.—Bounty in favour of the Irish Press.—The equalization of the impost between the two Islands requisite.—The benefits of such a measure.—State of the population of Ireland.—Interference of the Church of Rome with the education of the laity.—The wretched condition of the peasantry.—Their crimes the effects of ignorance.—The means resorted to to keep alive traditionary resentments.—Only mode of improvement. 72

CHAPTER VII.

The London Press.—Comparative superiority of it.—Number of newspapers.—Their recent increase.—

Cause of it.—Table of comparative increase.—Disproportionate strength of parties.—Violences of the Press and the populace.—Divisions and jealousies of opposite writers.—The Times.—Morning Chronicle.—Herald.—New Times.—Morning Post.—Courier.—Globe and Traveller, &c.—Examiner.—Guardian.—John Bull.—Personality present and past.—Mr. Cobbett.—Effects of his writings page 89

CHAPTER VIII.

The London Press.—Style of printing.—Reporting.—Privileges of the House of Commons.—The gallery.—The reporters.—Mode of reporting the debates.—Reports imperfect.—Erroneous opinions on the subject.—Expediency of facilitating the labours of reporters.—Plan for this purpose.—The want of accommodation in the two Houses of Parliament.—Necessity of improvement.—Propriety of extending the improved mode of reporting to Courts of Justice.—Liberties taken by reporters of the proceedings before London Magistrates.—Necessity for reform in this department.—Dramatic Criticisms.—Their faults, and mode of amendment. 130

CHAPTER IX.

English provincial Press.—Freedom of discussion, and the effects of it.—Style of printing.—Extent of talent.—State of public feeling in the country.—Periodical discontents.—Mode of suppression by the Government.—The advantages of political discussion in the time of peace.—The duty of parties in this respect.—Actions for libel rare.—Reporting.—Necessity of reducing the burthens of the Press 149

CHAPTER X.

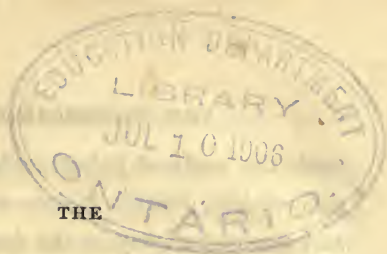
The periodical Press of Scotland.—State of the elective franchise.—Of parties.—Political feeling. —Number of newspapers.—Mode of conducting them.—Comparative circulation with the English.—Origin and excesses of party dissensions.—Influence of the Whigs. —Edinburgh Review. —Personality. —Blackwood's Magazine. —Scotsman. —Beacon. —Exasperation of parties. —Lamentable consequences. —State of the lower orders.—Duty of the Government with respect to the Press and the people page 161

CHAPTER XI.

The Press in Ireland.—Number of newspapers.—Comparative situation of the two Kingdoms in this respect. —Low state of the art of printing. —Arrangement of intelligence.—Size of the papers.—Literary merit. —State of parties.—Protestant and Catholic.—The effects of religious divisions.—Mode of conducting the Dublin journals.—No magazine or review published in Ireland.—Cause of this.—Constitution of Irish society.—Altercations of the Press.—Abuse.—Reporting 186

CHAPTER XII.

The difficulties of the Press fairly stated as they affect both Kingdoms.—The apathy on the part of proprietors in relation to their own interest.—The unequal pressure of the Stamp-laws.—Conveyance of newspapers postage free. 200



PERIODICAL PRESS

OF

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE Periodical Press of Great Britain is justly the boast of Englishmen, and the envy and admiration of foreigners. It is the most powerful moral machine in the world, and exercises a greater influence over the manners and opinions of civilized society than the united eloquence of the bar, the senate and the pulpit. Like the Steam Engine, however, it may be said to be but in its infancy, for those advantages which it is capable of conferring on the human race, appear to be designed, principally, for future generations. The Press has undoubtedly within

itself the seeds of indestructibility; but it is, nevertheless, difficult to determine how arduous and protracted may be the contest which it has yet to wage with the prejudiced and despotic rulers of the Continent of Europe, before its powers or its liberty be recognized.

As far as history enables us to trace the fact, the Press has had to maintain a most unequal warfare with the Governments of Europe. Toleration is a word not yet admitted into the court vocabularies of more monarchical States than one or two; and the *right* which every man has to utter his sentiments, is still dreaded, as if its recognition were the forerunner of plague and pestilence. Even the invention of Printing, to which we are so much indebted, is not unfrequently held up as a judgment inflicted upon us for our sins. True is it, that the freedom of thought has again and again burst the bands with which arbitrary princes and intolerant priests have bound it; but it is equally true, that it has as often been refettered. The power which was found to be ineffectual in extirpating the source of opinions, and the means of propa-

gating them, was next directed to limit their circulation, and control their tendency. The invention of Laurentius of Haerlem, in the fifteenth century, was too valuable to be restricted by patent, far less be buried in oblivion. Opinions might be shackled, information might be retarded,—and so they were, as far as the dungeon and the stake could accomplish,—but the Press itself was immortal. When driven from one quarter it appeared in another, and although its ministers perished, its types, transcripts, levers, and other processes, were sacredly preserved.

At a very early age, a few years indeed after its discovery, the art of Printing was introduced into England. It was at first confined to the uses of the Church of Rome, under the direction of its priesthood; and although, from the violences of the Reformation, we are deprived of such evidence as would have shewn us more clearly to what purposes they applied it, still we have enough to convince us that its labours were confined chiefly to theological and historical researches, the only branches of science, perhaps,

which the taste or the institutions of the period permitted. For upwards of two hundred years the Press was restricted to the cloister. It was worked in darkness, and its productions, which have been handed down to us, give proof of it. In this country, however, about the commencement of the sixteenth century, men began to avail themselves of their privileges, by avowing sentiments, which in Germany and the Low Countries, had been propagated under cloud of night—which had been nursed in silence and solitude, and at the awful peril of confiscation of property, and loss of life. But even here, at a much later period, and bold as its apostles were, the Press had but a precarious existence. The light of liberty began to dawn upon it, and that was all. Its effusions were hunted like a partridge on the mountains. The rays of knowledge it diffused were fitful, feeble, languishing, and sometimes apparently extinguished altogether. But still the embers remained. Soon the flame was fanned afresh, and although the sentiments which it lighted up in the minds of men, had to struggle with inveterate prejudices and the

most revolting superstition, still they did not struggle in vain. They acquired strength unobserved—they obtained an ascendancy over ignorance and injustice, which it would be rash in any power to attempt to subdue.

Although the Press found a sure asylum in England, from the zeal and efforts of the early ministers of the Reformation ; it was not till the Reformation had established itself, till its innovations could be said to be incorporated with the laws of the land, and till the principles of civil liberty had completed their alliance, as it were, with the already recognized institutions of religious freedom, that a licence was given to the general emanations of authorship. Since the Reformation till now, the law of libel, and the legitimate boundaries of public discussion, have been as ill understood, and the subject of as much contention, as the rights of thought and opinion were at an antecedent era. Rapid strides, we admit, were made towards liberal sentiments during the whole of the eighteenth century ; but it was not till the latter part of it—till about the commencement of the discon-

tents in North America, that periodical literature made its appearance,—when the voluminous folios of the antiquarian began to give place to a lighter but more ephemeral species of writing. Pamphlets then came into fashion.—Saturday Essays were common to almost every breakfast parlour—and newspapers put on airs of importance which they had never assumed before. The last, instead of being humble diaries of the weather—mere almanacks for accidents, holidays, and the prices of wheat, O. P. Jamaica, and Newcastle coals,—printed on semi-waste paper, and sold for three-half-pence, their conductors ventured to publish opinions on politics, and employ persons capable of attracting observation by animadverting upon public affairs. As newspapers became more political and literary, their publishers likewise became more skilful in other branches of the profession. Regular reports were introduced, and the great lexicographer himself was not ashamed to be a nightly drudge in the attainment of such an object. Night after night has he forced his way into the gallery of St. Stephen's, and stored his

cranium with all the flowers of English oratory. When the city slept, he was busy unbundling the mixed sentiments he had heard, and conveying them to paper, for publication in the morning. Since the days of Dr. Johnson the improvements which have taken place in this department are astonishing. Periodicals are now the staple commodity in the literature of the country. A monthly magazine in the present day is not more different from one published in 1775 than the *Times* newspaper of 1823 is superior in every essential respect to one of the same date published in Connaught in Ireland.

It is unnecessary to eulogize the benefits which free discussion, on every subject has invariably produced amongst mankind. Wherever it has been tolerated, the intellectual improvement of society has advanced equally with national prosperity. Man has become a freer, a more industrious, a more rational, and a more happy animal. His comforts have become more abundant and less savage, as his knowledge has extended. In proportion as the curb has been removed from his tongue, and the expansion of

his mental faculties encouraged, in the same ratio has he become more useful to himself, and more beneficial to his fellow-creatures. The most free, prosperous, and enlightened, as well as the most enslaved, wretched, and benighted nations of the earth, are living proofs of the fact. Is there a people more enslaved than the people of Russia—and where is there an instance of so extensive an empire so deeply and darkly veiled in ignorance? Where do we find more wretchedness, and more disaffection, than in the Italian States,—but where is public opinion more shackled? Are not the Spaniards sunk in the most abject misery, in the most profound ignorance, and in the most debasing superstition,—but how long have they been interdicted from the light of literature, from the blessings of free discussion and toleration? In short, go where we will we find mankind prosperous in proportion as they are enlightened. As the Press has flourished, so have the people—as it has been cramped, so have been their energies—and where enquiry has been confined to the abstruse sciences, or what more properly belongs to the *few* than to the *many*, national

amelioration, like Sterne's bucket in the well, has not only been suspended; but this limitation to mental researches has even thwarted the beneficial operation of such studies upon the community at large.

The human character is robbed of its prerogative when denied the consideration of what most concerns it, and what must be most precious to it; and it is foully libelled, if it be said, that the unfettered mind cannot be depended on, so far as regards what is best for it to know, and most advantageous for it to enjoy. Yet these stale doctrines of the convent are, in many of the States of Europe, still considered to be orthodox. They run through every line of every edict—they are the theme of every state-paper that issues from the Continental Cabinets. It is not enough, it seems, that the less enlightened part of society do not know what is politically right and wrong—they are positively prevented from acquiring such dangerous knowledge! The first step in the march of education is to become conversant with the laws and institutions of our native country. But, till

lately, this was the last subject that the people were permitted to turn their attention to. The old governments discountenance all such enquiries into public affairs. Despotism throws a cloak over the sublime mysteries of diplomacy, which common eyes cannot penetrate. On politics and religion many millions of liege subjects are denied the exercise of their own minds. They must not communicate ;—they may *think*, (Heaven reward such liberality !) but they must not advise ;—they may abhor in their hearts, but their lips must not give the semblance of utterance to the strong reprobation they feel.

In this way the primary elements of knowledge are withheld from nine-tenths of mankind ; and the only branches of science which the artizan and the peasant in every country feel naturally desirous to examine for themselves are, by the terrors of civil and ecclesiastical law, to them a dead letter and a sealed book. The obvious injustice of such conduct—the dark, brooding bigotry that would chain down human intellect to creeds and systems, devised in times of barbarity, demonstrate how

truly the abettors of them, in our day, are the tyrants and hypocrites they are said to be. They will not erase a single letter from the exploded dogmas of their ancestors ; they will not unclothe one solitary link of the iron chain of rule which their predecessors wielded. They tremble at the thought of retributive justice. What has been obtained by force, must be maintained by force. They shudder at the bare consequences of concession, and they contrive to transfer to the greater liberality of a successor what they dare not meet themselves. They adopt the alternative, therefore—the only alternative which their phantom fears will allow them to embrace, which is—that during their dynasty at least the mind must endure its wonted shackles—that their slaves must be contented to hug their chains. In such States the freedom of the Press is a rancorous eye-sore, the object of perpetual jealousy and alarm ; and the publications that come from it so circumstanced, if of a political tendency, are exclusively devoted to the will of the rulers, be the author who he may.

We entertain an opinion that the benefits of

free discussion are so generally acknowledged, and the powers of the Periodical Press so universally recognized, that the time cannot be far distant when the latter will break down all the obstacles that are yet opposed to it upon the Continent of Europe. It is by the Press alone that the first successful assault upon intolerant Governments will be made. How far it has already succeeded we will not say ; but before man can enjoy the blessings of equitable laws he must first be instructed, and before he will lend his aid to establish and protect such institutions, the Press must first teach him their value. The peasant (except for pay,) will not fight for what he does not comprehend, and cannot justly appreciate. The “mountain nymph, sweet Liberty,” cannot be successfully wooed by a barbarian. Without the blessings of rational information freedom has no charm for him. But chase his ignorance away—remove the barriers that have hitherto limited his mind to the homely adages of his forefathers, for the most part the offspring of knavery and superstition, and you at once open up a way by which he not only ameliorates

his own condition, but becomes the humble instrument of improving all around him.

This is demonstrable from the history of every passing day. How comes it that we see so many abortive attempts at revolution, so many ineffectual struggles to reform the laws, and better the condition of foreign States? From nothing so much as from the disproportion that exists, in point of political science, between the information of the leaders of such revolutions, and their inferior, but, physically speaking, more efficient partisans. The efforts of the former are abortive, because, generally, the institutions they introduce bear no relation to the intelligence of the people. The acts of the politician are too refined for the mass of the population. He sacrifices nothing to their prejudices; he revolutionizes too much, and with too little caution; he immolates the high-priests of bigotry, and seizes upon the spoils of their temples too soon; and consequently, his object is defeated. Improvement marches tardily, not precipitately; it must blossom before it ripens; and before the laws and institutions of a king-

dom can be advantageously revolutionized, education must have previously pointed out the extent to which the change should go, the precise link in the chain at which it ought to stop, and the various interests and prejudices which are likely to be affected by it.

We are told the public Press can be perverted to the worst of purposes. We know it,—we see daily and hourly proofs of this. But what of all this terrible “licentiousness,” as it is termed? Does it really trench upon public opinion to any serious extent? Or, if the opinions of the crowd are contaminated by the Press in this kingdom, would they have been so, to the same frightful extreme as we have witnessed at various periods of commercial difficulty, had the Press been as free and unshackled as we contend it should be? They would not. Any injurious consequences that have proceeded from the influence of newspaper opinions have, to a very great extent, been the result of the restrictive laws of the Government. The operation of those laws has invariably led to the contrary results that were contemplated. The present tax, raised pro-

gressively, penny after penny, with the increasing thirst for information among the people, till it now amounts to the enormous rate of 100 per cent. upon the original price of a newspaper, has proved the most impolitic tax that ever was made a source of revenue. It would at the period of its imposition have crushed and annihilated the press altogether, had it not been for the momentous events which each day's paper unfolded. These events were too intimately allied with the vital interests of every man in the country, to pass unnoticed or unwatched, whatever the sacrifice might be. The tax was overlooked in the restlessness of the times, and amid the whirlwind of other taxes with which the public were saddled. It was not one bit the less impolitic on this account. The "Six Acts" was another measure directed against the Press:—a measure futile and abortive in the extreme, so far as the suppression of violent invectives against the ministry or seditious writings was intended by it, but supereminently calculated to encourage newspaper monopoly. The prosecutions of the "Constitutional Asso-

ciation," although not chargeable to the account of Ministers, nor particularly directed against the journals, were also repugnant to constitutional freedom, and, as the end has shewn, have tended rather to exasperate party feelings, and augment individual suffering, than stifle the ribaldry or the vices of the Press. In short, these measures have been the unfortunate means of making newspapers more the slaves, the mere machines of faction, than they ever were before. The price has narrowed the selection, and effectually interposed, so far as the labouring classes are concerned, between the desire to obtain information, and the exercise of free discussion. The difficulty of access to more journals than one or two, has tied the poorer sort of readers, and even the tradesman of ordinary means, to the restricted details and observations of only one side. These people are now party men, of more excitable feelings and of stronger personal antipathies than they were at the beginning of the French Revolution.

CHAPTER II.

THE more diversified public opinion is, the less extensive will be its ramifications, and the less danger to the monarchy is to be apprehended from it. Were all the dissenters of Great Britain linked together by one creed, and cemented by one undivided interest, their united hostility to the Established Church would be irresistible ; but, happily, each sect steers its own course, and bears a jealousy equally strong towards a neighbouring conventicle as towards the legal church. They retain no fellow-feeling, no brotherly love, beyond the threshold of their respective castes ; and there is not a trace of similarity amongst them in any thing but in that one act of secession. It is the same with political as it is with religious partisanship. Were the Mi-

nistry opposed by the conjoined forces of all their avowed opponents, the intrigues of faction would be more successful, parliamentary attacks would be more frequent and more violent, while electioneering contests would more frequently terminate in favour of whoever happened to be at that moment the idol of the multitude, and however intensely the choice might be repented of. The more, therefore, that public debates are encouraged, and the more diversified are the different theories and opinions that float on the bosom of society, even in the most frantic moments, the less strength will each faction possess, and the easier will it be to soothe the asperities of hostile parties.

To accomplish this, the public Press must be untaxed and unshackled, and the fullest scope given to every writer to develop his views, and to every reader to exercise his judgment as he pleases. We wish the clang of opposite theories to reverberate ; we wish the antipodes of faction to come in contact ; we wish to see the swaggering aristocrat and the republican leveller meet in the same arena ; we wish to see the opinions

of Paley and Paine—of chancellor Eldon and little Waddington—lying upon the same table, in the same smoke-pipe shop. Beat down the fence that divides them, let them but have a meeting, and we fearlessly leave the on-lookers to pass their opinion.

Nothing has tended so much to calm the heart-burnings of party zeal in the United States of America, as the vast profusion of newspapers. The cheapness of the article makes it abundant; and this abundance has produced, what few statists will be willing to admit, a kind of neutralizing effect on the body politic. The intemperance of the most violent demagogue, or the subtle reasonings of the most artful monarchist, produce but little sensation amid the ocean of politics there; for so multiplied are its currents, that the number of partisans that sail in one stream is but small, and their power feeble in proportion. Were newspapers in that country less abundant from any restrictive act of the government, not only would the numerical ratio of parties be less, but the zeal and hostility of each would, from the diminished quantum of

opinions, and the sectarian nature of these opinions, become stronger and more acrimonious, and of course more dangerous to the tranquillity of the republic.

The British Ministry had a double object in view in taxing newspapers. The first was revenue ; and the second, the banishment of immoral and slanderous publications from general circulation. A third object may be added ; namely, the limitation of public animadversions on their conduct to as narrow a circle as possible, by enhancing the market-price of them. We say nothing here as to the justice or injustice of this measure ; the impolicy of it, however, we are satisfied of. Did it serve the purpose ? Except in the way of emolument, did it produce any beneficial or moral effect ? Did it even answer the main end they had in view by it ? We submit, that it did not. On the contrary, it injured, if it did not actually *diminish* the circulation of every respectable newspaper in the kingdom ; while it had scarcely a visible operation on those of the less reputable, or more dangerous class, if you will, which Ministers were desirous to dis-

card from the political arena. A few years passed, and taxation was the principal fetter which the Press had to contend with; at last it, even IT, was found insufficient. The tax was productive enough; but *that* was not *the evil*; it did not silence the demagogue—it imposed no embargo on the pens of the disaffected. Besides, it was less productive in one quarter and more in another than was desirable, and a new manacle had to be invented. This was what are called “The Six Acts.” No man by this measure is allowed to publish his sentiments in a newspaper without becoming bound himself, or his publisher becoming bound for him, in the sum of 300*l.* sterling, that what is published shall not be seditious or *blasphemous*. This last word was a *set-off*, as they say,—a little gold-leaf to gild the pill that was to be swallowed, calculated to please the Church, and pacify those sensitive supporters of “civil and religious liberty” vulgarly called “the Saints.” Another half-penny per sheet was added to the burden, and much good was expected from the new measure.

We will not, as we said before, quarrel about

the justice or the alleged necessity for this new restrictive and arbitrary penal law: we only ask—What good has resulted from it? None whatever! The kingdom was inundated then with violent tirades against the existing order of things—it is so still! The press had, to an extent not experienced before, become licentious—call it what you will—it is equally licentious now! Publications of a scurrilous, loose, anarchical, irreligious, and immoral tendency abounded—they are as abundant as ever! In short, the restrictive laws made scarcely any, and if any, at most but a very feeble and futile impression,—and that feeble impression but of a temporary kind,—upon the array of offensive publications. If the truth must be told, the ministerial press suffered by these measures to a greater extent than the opposition press did. This is easily accounted for. Those writers who did not follow the sentiments of the artisan department of the reading public, nor pander their principles and their talents for gain; but who, either from *fear*, family-pride, or from conscience, supported the measures of the Pitt, Per-

ceval, and Londonderry administrations, had, as was to be expected, a very different sort of subscribers from their opponents. We concede that these readers were generally more wealthy, and of a higher class, on the side of the Government journals, than were those who supported the opposition ones. So far as this went, the advantage *apparently* belonged to the former. So thought the Minister, and it was under this persuasion he legislated. But he was mistaken. He either was misled by false reasoning in others, or his own judgment was in error. Neither Mr. Perceval nor Lord Londonderry, liberal and discriminating as they were, were acquainted with, or they did not recognize, one of the first maxims of Mr. Pitt; which was, to let the press correct the press, and to permit scurrility and abuse to be neutralized by their own excesses, and be rendered nerveless and poisonless by the ridicule of one writer, the indignant declamation of another, the contempt of a third, and the hatred of every silent or neutral party. The press, and the press alone, can correct its own abuses

and licentiousness. If these abuses are put down in any other way, it must be by the total destruction of the Press itself.

Since the interesting era of the French Revolution, the people of these Kingdoms have been an inquisitive, prying, doubting, and reading people. We do not say they were strangers to this disposition prior to that period; but we choose that period for our argument, chiefly because their feelings received then an extraordinary impetus. The great mass of the population were not then, any more than they are now, newspaper buyers. Mark the distinction,—they were *readers*, not buyers. They read in club-rooms, taverns, and coffee-houses, and in subscription companies of from twenty to a hundred, or even two hundred members. From these sources alone did the tradesmen, and mechanics, and labourers of England and Scotland derive their news, and imbibe their principles; or if you choose, their *prejudices*. But there was another class of men, who, besides being readers, were also buyers of newspapers. This consisted of persons of a higher shade in life than the for-

mer ; the merchant, the trader, the respectable shop-keeper, the clerk, the accountant, the easy circumstanced tradesman, and such like ; who, from want of leisure, or from a desire to read the newspaper at home, bought each for himself, and thereby became a direct patron and encourager of the public journals. Above these stood the clergyman, the man of law, and the man of physic, the small but independent land-owner, the family of limited but adequate income, the naval and military officer, and the man of rank from the baronet upwards. All these were regular purchasers of newspapers.

Under such circumstances, the question for the Minister should have been, when considering the expediency of a tax upon newspapers,—Upon whom shall this tax chiefly fall ? Whose interests will it principally affect ? What papers will it encourage or injure ? This was the enquiry, and this may have been the enquiry ; but the Minister had not the aid of experience to convince him that the plans he had in view would be unavailing and inefficient ; for when he was legislating for what he conceived to be

the advantage of the more respectable portion of the press, and enacting measures that he thought would tend to discourage those publications which were apparently written to derange and corrupt the public mind, he was actually counteracting his own intentions, and injuring those whom it was his interest to succour. The tax, however, was imposed, continued, and enlarged. All this was done for good ! The chief burden fell upon their own handiworks,—upon their own advocates,—upon the disappointed host of literary champions that fought manfully in their defence against the charges and onsets of the popular phalanx ; the latter were scarcely affected by it. And how could it be otherwise ? The tap-rooms, coffee-houses, and club-rooms, did not care for it. A penny in the month, perhaps, additional, balanced the difference. But the family man was otherwise situated. To him it became a serious matter ; ten pounds in the year instead of six, and the times, moreover looking gloomy, was a rise of importance, which prudence hinted was by far too much, especially when he could deluge his appetite with politics

every morning or night at some cheap place of public resort, for one tenth of the money, or one fifth of it, coffee and scandal included. It was the sacrifice of a little domestic comfort to be sure, but one that was well repaid by the saving in his expenditure ; and no sooner was it conceived than it was executed,—he bought no more newspapers.

When it is remembered what sort of newspapers were generally read by the persons alluded to, who were wont to be buyers, it will not be difficult to apprehend whether or not the Minister, in imposing such a tax, acted with cautious discrimination. The Stamp Office returns will, in some degree, prove this. And if they fail doing this to his entire satisfaction, let him go down to the country, and enquire among such persons and families as we have pointed out, what newspapers used formerly to lie on their tables, and whether the same or any are to be found there now. He will hear ample confirmation of our assertion. It is true that the consumption of newspapers has increased within the last twenty years, that is to say, it was greater

a few years before the battle of Waterloo, than it was for several years after the commencement of the French war; it was greater during the Queen's trial than it was during the riots of Lord George Gordon; the sale was greater at the time of Thurtell's trial than it was during the Burdett riots. But this brings nothing against our argument. It only goes to shew that the circulation increased in spite of the restrictions, and that more newspapers were read, notwithstanding that fewer were purchased by individuals. If so, if the consumption increased in defiance of taxes and restrictions, how much more would it have multiplied had no taxes or limitations been enforced? Indeed, we have sufficient experience to know, and our enquiries have been sufficiently extensive to convince us, that all of these restrictive measures have been injurious to the cause they were intended to serve; and by confining the medium and lower orders of society to the perusal of one or two papers at the most, and those strictly of their own creed, have actually made these people

less liberal, and more obstinate in the expression of their opinions.

The operative and labouring classes of society can never read too much. Every facility that is afforded them to add to their stock of information, is, in a political point of view, beneficial. The more they become acquainted with the theories and disquisitions of political writers, and the more intensely they muse over the arguments advanced in support of opposite systems, the less effect has declamation on their passions, and the less liable are they to be misled by, or made converts to the Utopian, but seductive schemes of fanciful and popular authors.

CHAPTER III.



WHEN taxation was supposed to have done its utmost to cramp the energies of the newspaper press; and when the different restrictive laws which we have mentioned had been enforced, with the intention of driving democratical, seditious, and blasphemous writers from the field, all of which, even at their birth, gave proof of inefficiency, a new engine for the defence of political and religious orthodoxy was erected, and called the "Constitutional Association." An institution of a somewhat similar nature had a short existence at the commencement of the French Revolution.

We wish to speak as reservedly as we can of this new society, whose object it soon appeared was to usurp the prerogative of the

King's Attorney-general, and instead of beholding the abettors of sedition brought to trial upon an *ex-officio* information, its agents were so bent upon exercising the virtues of philanthropy, as to give the alleged offender the benefit of a regular trial by indictment before a special jury: we say we are desirous to speak respectfully of it, because it was composed of many respectable and honourable men, and at its outset was patronised and supported by some of the most intelligent and illustrious characters in the land.

But we cannot help remarking, that however pure may have been the motives of the individuals who composed it, they were obviously swayed too much by a *false* zeal for the King and Constitution. The prosecutions they instituted were chiefly against obscure and indigent individuals, whose names, or the publications they vended, were little known beyond the narrow sphere of their residence, till the pompous trial, at the instance of the Association, gave them an importance and a notoriety which they possessed not before. This society was formed in the beginning of 1821, at a time when the

bill of "Pains and Penalties" against the late Queen was the topic of general discussion and reprobation among the people. At the same time the dispersion of a Reform meeting at Manchester by a military force, by which many persons were wounded, and even some lives lost, and for presiding at which Henry Hunt was sentenced to two years and a half's confinement in Ilchester gaol, was violently denounced in the public prints, and in various cheap publications, as a wanton infraction of the liberty of the subject. The Ministry of the day were represented as nothing else but a gang of aristocratic tyrants and hypocrites, by whom every spark of liberty that was dear to Englishmen was about to be extinguished. The whole kingdom rang with complaints and misrepresentations of a similar nature and tendency. The "Constitutional Association" undertook the suppression of all this, but whether they accomplished it is one question; and if it be said they did, whether they accomplished at vast expense, what would have been cured by the healing hand of time

alone, is another question, both of which the public can now decide.

We confess that there are institutions in this country which a licentious press might easily place in imminent danger. To preserve these institutions is the duty of every good and loyal subject. But the laws of the land have not left them defenceless. On the contrary, they are all well protected. If the king is called a tyrant by one writer, and an usurper by another ; if his Ministers are called ignorant, corrupt, and dishonest ; if the judges of the land are styled mercenary and unjust, it is the duty of the Attorney-general to prosecute the offenders. If the Established Church is libelled, the church can defend itself and punish the libeller. If a corporate body is held up to odium and reprobation, that body has a plain duty to perform towards their assailants. It is the same with a private family, and with a private individual. Each society and individual are the best judges of the injury they have sustained. But if a society of men, not the legitimate or elected guar-

dians of the crown, or the institutions of the state, arrogate to themselves the right of judging when, and to what extent, the one and the other are in danger, or falsely and maliciously arraigned, and take upon themselves the prosecution of the offending persons, by funds not their own, but confided to them by a party, and from which prosecutions, whether successful or unsuccessful, they can suffer no injury either in purse or person, there is an end at once to the liberty of the press, and to all fair and constitutional judicial procedure. The peace and liberty of the subject are wantonly intruded upon: write or publish what he will, he is in perpetual fear, he knows not his prosecutor, he knows only that his funds are large and seemingly inexhaustible; and that defeat can as little cover him with dread as with ridicule; for he is a spirit invisible, which the strong arm of the law cannot reach, and at which the finger of public scorn cannot be pointed.

It is agreed that the proceedings at the instance of the "Constitutional Association" were

more lenient towards offenders than are those that follow an *ex-officio* information. Let this be granted ; still it becomes a question whether the Attorney-general would have hazarded his reputation as a lawyer, and his dignity as an officer of state, in attempting to punish the frivolous offences which the society seized upon, and prosecuted term after term at so much cost, and with so much asperity. It is far from being probable that he would have had the temerity to stand up in Parliament, and say he had expended so many thousands of the public money in putting the unknown and *nameless* adherents of Carlile and Waddington into gaol, or in punishing with fine and imprisonment some poor, unheard-of book-venders, of a similar stamp. The public indignation would have been too strong for him ; he would have shrunk within himself at the confession, and would have felt himself degraded by punishing into importance so many impotent creatures. The "Constitutional Association," therefore, did what the Attorney-general never would have attempted, and

put money into the pockets of lawyers that would have been much better employed in the cleaning of the streets.

Men of the most generous dispositions, and of the meekest christian virtues, are nevertheless not completely exempt from the failings and peevish resentments of human nature. Public men are ever liable to public animadversion; and he must be a philosopher indeed who has for a life-time, or the greater part of one, acted a conspicuous part in the drama of politics, and run the gauntlet among the daily journals, without feeling sore from their lashings, and occasionally nursing some inclination to repay their attentions. It would be unfair to say that the directors of the "Constitutional Association," whatever were their sensations, acted from any such motives, in any instance. We are not aware that there is the least ground for bringing such a charge against them. But nothing would have been more natural than their smarting wounds influencing their conduct. To their constituents they owed no responsibility. They held large funds; they ran

no pecuniary hazard; they might or they might not institute a prosecution; they might *bargain* to withdraw it; they might proceed and obtain a verdict; or they might be defeated and pay the expenses: they might indeed, from the paucity of the offences, and the obscurity and indigence of the offenders, be foiled in every attempt; yet they were not answerable for their conduct to any Parliament, court, corporation, or recognised society of any kind. Here, therefore, if ever there was an institution open to abuse, is one. So long as they had a pound sterling in their exchequer they had the power of expending the last shilling of it in annoying by prosecution, or by threats of prosecution, some unfortunate object of their spleen, whose greatest crime, perhaps, had either been in libelling *them*, or bidding them defiance; and they might persist in this conduct till their money was spent and their opponent either an exile or a beggar. After doing all this they could turn round on their subscribers with some pathetic address, replete with the *good* effects that had resulted from

their labours—recommend a farther stretch of *liberality*, which if not attended to, all they had to do was to toss the reins again to the Attorney-general, and retire with the fictitious consolation that they had done God and the King good service *gratis*. They had every incentive to act partially and arbitrarily; and although defeated at every step, they knew that their successful opponent *gained* nothing by his victory. He gained his expenses; but what recompense was that for the anxiety of mind he had suffered,—the dread of irretrievable ruin which a depending action at the suit of an affluent and irresponsible body inspired; the injury that his credit as a tradesman would sustain, in the estimation even of his former friends and employers, and the thousand other nameless casualties that would result from the circumstance of his opponents being powerful and he comparatively helpless?

It is further apparent that the whole of the prosecutions instituted by the Association were of that kind that invariably were considered within the province of the Attorney-general.

They were all political offences. The *res gesta* of the offence consisted in the attacks made upon, or the calumnies conveyed against, the recognised establishments of the kingdom. If these offences were at all deserving of punishment, it was the duty of the legal adviser of the Crown to proceed against them; and his having refused to do so, in such a way that the "Constitutional Association" thought themselves warranted in assuming his prerogative, tends to convey the reflection, that that official person was remiss in the execution of his duty to the state,—a charge they will hesitate to bring; or that they held letters patent to proceed in his name,—a circumstance we are not disposed to believe; or that they, the directors and confidential advisers of the society, were better judges of the criminality and tendency of the different publications than Sir Robert Gifford, or Sir John Copley—a stretch of presumption they will surely feel disinclined to insist upon.

But laying aside all analogical reasoning on the subject, let us examine what the Society did in the hey-day of their power, and when their

funds were flourishing. In a work of this kind, however, we must necessarily be brief, and pass over many objections that might be urged. Let us see what they have done. We in vain look around us for demonstration of the salutary effects of their labours. We are not aware that they have extirpated from public sale a single offensive publication. They have punished severely several individuals; they have prosecuted to conviction various traffickers in worthless publications; and they have compromised actions with others, upon promised destruction of the illicit commodity. They were, to a certain extent, the means of chasing Carlile from Fleet-street; and removing the "Mart of Infidelity," as it was called, from one quarter of the City to another. But what of all this? Every work that called forth their indignation and abhorrence, is still exhibited and sold publicly. Carlile, or rather his emissaries, have returned to Fleet-street; and have hoisted the deistical flag in a more conspicuous station than before; while the political and theological productions of Paine, Voltaire, Mi-

rabeau, Palmer, O'Connor, Shelly, Byron, and even Carlile himself, stare the passenger in the face. These excommunicated works are at this moment in greater circulation than at any former time. They never were so greedily sought after in the country. An importance has been attached to the venders of them which they could not have contemplated, and for which they are indebted to the "Constitutional Association"; while, to crown all, the humbler classes of our countrymen manifest on all occasions the most ardent desire to peruse writings that have given rise to so many cavillings in courts of law—to so many motions in the House of Commons, and to suppress which so much exertion has been made by the avowed friends of Government.

It is therefore plain that no permanently beneficial effects have been produced by the prosecutions of the "Constitutional Association." The vast sums subscribed have slipped out of their hands imperceptibly; while the sins of sedition and atheism, which it was their aim to punish and eradicate, are more prolific

and abundant than at any former period of our history. It is not a little remarkable too that while the Society directed its legal thunder against the poorer fry of book-retailers—against the pamphlet-hawker, and the cheap-book itinerant,—they never offered battle to any of the more powerful but not less unorthodox and dangerous champions of the Press. Opinions hostile to the established order of things were not then, any more than they are now, confined to the protégées and confederates of Carlile and his equals. These opinions may have been more fashionably attired; they were generally more insidiously but not less unmeaningly expressed; and the rancour with which certain of our respectable and long-established and extensively-circulated newspapers have attacked the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of the kingdom, (which attacks, by the by, are greedily perused by the very lowest of the community,) has been productive of more revolutionary and anti-constitutional principles, than all the effusions of Paine, or the second-hand pamphleteerings of his imitators. Against these champions, however, of the people the Association

levelled no blow. And yet, be it noted, their sentiments were then as undisguised as they are still. They are quite unambiguously expressed, and they will continue to be so, we have no doubt, unscared by prosecutions of any kind. Upon the whole the "Constitutional Association" seems to be a very useless institution. More good could surely have been done with the money in another way; and the effects would have been equally salutary, in a national point of view, had it ALL been honestly and conscientiously expended in the dissemination of harmless religious tracts, or in warming the lazy eloquence of some loyal and orthodox writer.* It would thereby have operated rather as a bounty than as a shackle on the Press; and while some of its humble drudges would have been saved from ruin and *popularity*—the conse-

* The merits of the Association were from time to time loudly extolled, in nicely measured sentences, in a certain Morning Paper. At the same time great care was taken that these studied effusions should be accompanied by a well-paid statement of the Society's judicial proceedings, and the new list of subscriptions. We have an opportunity of knowing that when any of these highly important documents (especially the first,) made their

quence of fruitless actions at law; the liberal subscriptions of the *enlightened* public would have gone to the industrious printer, and his equally industrious scribe, instead of to the hack of *Nisi Prius*, and the reigning Ciceros of the Old Bailey.

We have taken some pains in stating the grounds of our opposition to a Society, which by many excellent persons is considered to have stemmed the torrent of disloyalty and irreligion which at that crisis raged so furiously. In the first place we cannot conscientiously, upon an examination of the facts, attribute such triumphs to it; and in the second place we object to such political combinations, from a conviction that they are dangerous in principle, and could easily be turned, by all parties, against the liberties of free discussion. Political combinations, for

appearance, in the official journal aforesaid, generally from *one* to *six* hundred copies of it were taken by the Association and distributed in town and country *gratis*. This liberality, however, towards a loyal, and, we admit, respectable paper did not prevent the wicked wags of the day from saying, in reference to the Editor and his correspondent—" *Cato*, thou reasonest well."

the protection of certain opinions, or particular institutions, is a game that can be played by more parties than one. The Tories may have their association—the Whigs theirs—the radicals theirs. The church may have its association to punish slander—the Methodists may associate too; and so may the disciples of deism for the protection of their creed, and the rights of unshackled opinion. There is no end to the combination: the lurking and malevolent slanderer would thereby be protected; he would be enabled to stab in the dark with less risk of being personally punished—the association to which he belonged would shield him; and in this way the Press would become more licentious through those very means devised to confine its animadversions within proper boundaries.*

* Since the above was written it appears, that similar institutions are about being established in various parts of the United Kingdom, by the opposition part of the Press. In Glasgow, a public meeting has been held by the Whigs for that purpose—and the Catholics of Ireland, on the motion of Mr. O'Connell, are on the eve of collecting subscriptions to encourage and protect the *Catholic Press*. These owe their origin to the C. A.

CHAPTER IV.

So circumstanced is the public newspaper Press in Great Britain and Ireland. In Britain, as every one knows, the stamp-duty upon each newspaper of one sheet is threepence halfpenny per sheet, discount deducted. When a penny halfpenny is added to this, for paper, the bare sheet before it is carried to the printing office, costs no less a sum than fivepence ! This must be printed and published for sixpence halfpenny or sevenpence, subject to the commission of the news-agent who forwards it to the reader, and which upon the gross number published, particularly in London, cannot be less than ten or fifteen per cent.

It is true that newspapers derive an emolument from advertisements. But even here the

tax-gatherer interposes. On each advertisement in Britain is a charge of three shillings and sixpence. Cramped however as this source of gain is by this duty, it is further rendered of much less advantage to the Press, from ignorance and monopoly. Old established papers alone, that have acquired notoriety from the length of their days, and are known, or conceived to be extensively circulated, are made the channels of advertising. These aged, or popular ones, therefore, derive an emolument from a traffic, which is necessarily limited by the expense of it to a few papers. This monopoly not only stints the prosperity of younger establishments, but it enables those who enjoy it to maintain the cant and the exterior of independence with more effrontery. Their popularity bears them up against the taxes, and they gather strength and profit from every contemporary shipwreck. These journals alone can bid defiance to the shackles of the Minister. Every lesser establishment which these almost penal laws overturn, and every publisher who is driven from the field of competition, from the limited nature of his pecuniary re-

sources, are so many favourable coincidences to the swelled prosperity of the elder newsmongers. With the augmentation of prosperity they become more audacious. The monopoly they possess enables them, not only to disregard all legislative enactments, but actually provides them with resources sufficient to render those restrictive laws advantageous instead of hurtful to them, as the legislature obviously but unwisely intended they should be. They court patrons, who, if they are betimes ungrateful, it arises more from the fault of the supplicant than from any demurrer on their part, on the score of conscience or of flattery. The crowd rallies round them, and they please, and cajole, and delude the crowd. The multitude is their shield. Even an *ex-officio* prosecution, so much dreaded and abjured by certain foolish persons, is a benefit which one would think they are almost thankful for; for, on such occasions, such is the increase of readers and advertisements, that at the end of the sentence, the balance sheet, (saving the imprisonment,) is in their favour.*

* This is pertinently illustrated in the case of the *Observer* newspaper, on the trials of Thistlewood and

While these men of capital and calculation—these traders in puffs, quackery, and political economy—flourish under the auspices of the taverns and the gin-shops, their opponents, who follow a different course, and whose opinions are only palatable in a higher sphere of society, struggle frequently in vain for a stinted subsistence.

That this condition of the diurnal and weekly Press of these kingdoms has, to a certain extent, resulted from the mistaken policy of the Government, is too obvious to admit of a doubt. From the same cause has proceeded that intemperance of feeling on all public questions, which

ings for treason. The Court interdicted the publication of any of the evidence, in any of the public prints, until a specified time. The proprietor of the *Observer*, however, refused to obey this order, and published a full report of the proceedings in his next number. For this contempt he was brought before the Court, and fined in the sum of 500*l.*: but such was the demand for the paper that contained matter so interesting, that he was enabled, from the profits of his extra sale alone, to liquidate the fine, pocket the excess, and laugh alike at the impotency of the Court and the credulity of the public.

we witness among the commoner classes of society on all occasions. These latter have no opportunity of catching instruction but in the school of the faction or party to which they belong. No doubt they think the sentiments they have imbibed there, to be purer and more intelligible than those professed by others; and no one has a right to quarrel with their judgment. If the machinery that propagates these opinions is permitted to work, where is the justice of punishing the poor man, who has become a victim to what he could not resist; who has become infuriated from the effects of a poison he was obliged to swallow, and against which his means and mode of life did not provide him with an antidote?

But is there no way by which the edge of this intemperate feeling could be smoothed? Could not the reasonings and conclusions, and even the invectives, of opposite writers be made in some degree to amalgamate? Could they not be easily rendered less violent, and more harmless, than they are? We think they might. And the only way to effect this, is to remove

the restrictions and the taxes from the newspaper Press; to provide the humblest class of readers with the means of seeing and studying both sides of every public question that agitates, or is interesting to, the public. The simplest rule of arithmetic will apply here. If three-pence halfpenny could purchase a newspaper, two would in all probability be sold for one that is sold at present: and, what is more, the increase would not be greater on the side of the labouring classes than on that of the better educated and more affluent. This proposition is very susceptible of demonstration. The artisans and labourers of the United Kingdom seldom or never purchase a newspaper. They would not purchase one more or less whether the price were threepence or tenpence. They are already satisfied with the club and tavern system; and from it they will not deviate. They must talk as well as read; and this amiable propensity requires the *moisture* of a different atmosphere from that of their own firesides. From these places they will still continue to draw their political nourishment. But even

in these houses of news, the quantity of papers would, upon such a change as we recommend, be instantly enlarged. Articles, therefore, of a different quality would be served up. Opposite opinions would, perhaps, for the first time, be fairly confronted; and truth would be elicited from the contradictory statements of the morning and evening journalists.

This, so far as some millions of our countrymen are concerned, cannot be done, situated as the Press at present is. There are many thousands of news-rooms and places of resort for the labouring classes, where a ministerial paper, or one attached to the measures of Administration, is never seen. In these assemblies *The Times*, *The Morning Chronicle*, *Globe* and *Traveller*, or one or other of these, along with a provincial paper on the same side, are received. Mr. Cobbett sometimes appears there, when the exchequer is prosperous; but every other combatant is excluded, simply because the lord of the feast suits his dishes to the taste of his guests, and because these guests are sufficiently humble to be content only with what they can afford. The

statements, the reasonings, the conjectures, and the *forebodings* of these writers, are all eagerly listened to and credited. They bear sway over the minds of their votaries, and can, as it suits the views of their party or their own interest, soothe or inflame them—arouse their passions, excite their prejudices, or flatter their hopes.

But the advantage which would be derived from giving the labouring population the means of hearing all sides of a political question, is not the only one that would result from the change: the second and higher ranks of persons would buy and read at home. A tradesman, with any moderate share of discernment, is always able to estimate the utility of a public measure better in his own parlour than any where else. There he is safe from the influence, and the stormy dogmatism, of the tavern demagogue. There he can think for himself, and judge for himself; and the judgment he arrives at has this excellence in it, that it is his own—not the exotic growth of some talkative, factious ringleader. While such a man gathered the occurrences of the day by the light of his own

candle, he might at the same time be useful to his family; and to put such advantages within his reach, we contend it is not necessary that the amount of stamp duty revenue be materially diminished. Those persons who spend eight guineas a-year at present upon *one* London paper, would perhaps expend as much by receiving *two*. The increase of consumption would be equal to the reduction. The man whom economy sends occasionally from his desk to the coffee-house, or who spends his mornings there instead of with his family, would once more be enabled to enjoy his foreign and *domestic* intelligence *at home*. This is one additional paper purchased.—The lawyer would read in the same room where he waits his clients. This is likely to lead to the purchase of another: while the poor but loyal clergyman, being afforded the means of reading his own journal, instead of being under the unpleasant necessity of sending Betty with his compliments to Mr. Such-a-one for the loan of his London Courier, would make a third new purchaser. So also would Captain

Fancy of the ——— be enabled to *take in* The Morning Post, (merely to watch the marriage list and the death of an old uncle,) in addition to his regularly received highflier, The Sporting Magazine. Besides, Miss Sarsnet the mantua-maker might not, under such reduced prices, think it *too* extravagant, for the sake of her “young ladies,” to order her own “print” direct from the agent, instead of waiting, as she does at present, till her favourite *Herald* has travelled through half of the dirty-fingered mechanics of the parish, and when the only things legible are the publishers’ swelling title, and the cat and the boot of “Robert Warren.”

These results appear to us to be self-evident. Why do Ministers reduce the excise upon British spirits, but from the expectation that their consumption will be increased. The scheme has been again and again tried, and found to be effective. In tea and in salt, as well as in spirits, the experiment has succeeded. Why should the result not be the same in paper and in politics—in opinions and in public advertisements? Why

should knowledge be taxed, when luxuries are duty free? The former is as much an article of general use as are the latter. Newspapers are as indispensable in this free country, as tea, sugar, spirits, wines and tobacco.

CHAPTER V.

THE first salutary effect of a reduction in the newspaper stamp and advertisement duties would be the increase of newspapers; the second, the increase of advertisements; the third, the suppression of intense and angry political feelings among the labouring population; and the fourth, the overthrow of the present newspaper monopoly.

The three first require no comment, but the last is entitled to some investigation.

One of the main resources of a newspaper is its advertisements. The enormous charge made for the insertion of these limits the quantity of them. Were the duty reduced 50 per cent., long advertisements, or those exceeding twenty lines, might not much increase in number; but

short ones, from five to ten lines, would increase at least three times. It is always an object with an advertiser to insert his notice in as many different journals as possible, to throw it into as many channels as he can. But he rarely can afford to pay for more than one insertion ; and consequently, one paper alone can be favoured with it. It generally happens that his notice is intended for readers of the highest, as well as for those of the humblest class ; but still, under the present circumstances, the charge is too heavy to admit of his publishing it in such vehicles, in which he can be certain of its meeting, in one, the eye of the country reader ; in a second, the notice of the clergyman or dowager duchess ; and in a third, the eye of the merchant, banker, broker, city-trader, tradesman, publican, chambermaid, and servant of all work. He really cannot afford all this, and he risks but one journal, and that one his favourite, or one most resorted to in similar business. Were the tax reduced, and the stamp duty likewise reduced, as the consumption would be augmented the cost would be lessened, even beyond the proportion of duty taken off. It is

not overshooting the mark, therefore, to say, that what he pays for one insertion, for one advertisement, to one paper, would be enough to procure one insertion for, in *three* separate and distinct newspapers. It is freely admitted that an insertion *once*, in three distinct papers, gives more than three times the publicity to the notice that three insertions in *one* paper do. The probability is, that three papers would, under the new law, be benefited by advertisements, for one that is at present. Whoever has paid attention to the subject must have discovered, that fully one-half of all the notices that appear in any morning or evening London paper are not to be seen in any other; and that fully a fourth which appear in any one paper, never appear in that or any other paper a second time. The average cost of these latter is, perhaps, seven shillings and sixpence : if, therefore, their insertion could be procured for four shillings, as we propose, it is contended they would one and all of them appear in two papers, for one they do in now. So would it be with the first class we alluded to. These average about twelve

shillings: if they cost only five shillings and sixpence, which we think would be a fair price for them, they would, to an almost certainty, appear in three papers instead of one. This would produce an extension of profit and business to establishments that at present are deprived of it, through the narrow policy of the Government. It would give employment to many additional thousands of individuals; such as compositors, pressmen, clerks, agents, newsmen, and various other underlings that appertain to a printing-office and newspaper establishment.

It is said, and has been argued even in Parliament, that were the duty on advertisements reduced, advertisements would often become libels; and degenerate into low pasquinades, vulgar puffs, and disgusting attempts at wit, similar to what the American newspapers display. We deny this. It is not the cost of advertising that preserves the English newspapers from the wretched and sickening ribaldry of the republican journals; it is the taste of their readers. What passes current for witticism in the fashionable circles of New York, would not suit

the ideas of an English audience. If money here could procure a place for jokes similar to those that appear in the transatlantic papers, the price would be no hindrance to their appearance. But, fortunately, the price would here be no recompense. Every day there are advertisements offered to English newspapers, that are refused for the personal allusions they make, or *the object* they wish to accomplish. Here, as well as across the Channel, every editor knows the exact length he can intrude upon, and the utmost liberty he can take with public feeling; and it would soon be proved to be as imprudent a speculation for a London publisher to give currency to such bombast and ribaldry, as it is found in New York to be a harmless, if not a lucrative one.

But so far from the reduction in the price of newspapers and advertisements being productive of any such absurd and reprehensible articles as are to be found in the periodicals of the United States, we are impressed with an opinion that such a reduction would have the effect of improving and correcting the style and tendency of

some of those which are any thing but creditable to the English press and the present age. The large capital required to be invested in a newspaper, under the present regulations, induces proprietors to have recourse to every means by which the pecuniary interest of the concern can be promoted. In this way a license is given to quacks and mountebanks, political and medical; authors and authoresses, dull, poor, stale, or in their dotage; auctioneers, Jews, jobbers, and gamblers, *ad infinitum*,—to praise themselves, their works, their commodities, their terms, their honour, and their honesty, at so much per line, king's duty included. The profits arising from the trade, and the universality of the habit, shut the lips of the conductors of the papers. They keep no tell-tale pen to injure themselves. They would willingly expose the extent of the various impositions that are practised in this way, but the remunerating qualities of the evil mollify the tardy resentments and indignations it produces; for it is a fact that the quackeries of the late Dr. Solomon, still carried on, and those of hundreds of other

practitioners of a similar discreditable cast, the lotteries, and various other modes of imposition, which have only been successful from the unceasing commendation that interested persons have bestowed on them, have yielded more revenue to the public journals than the Government or any other regular advertising establishments in the kingdom. Innumerable instances have occurred in London, as well as in various parts of the country, where adventurers and speculators have been enabled to practise their schemes and frauds with success and with impunity, chiefly from the liberal manner in which they have paid for the publication of their own wonderful cures and qualifications, attested by no one knows whom, and patronised by royal dukes and princes of the blood, who never perhaps heard of their names, or the name of the paper they have employed.

A reformed press would remedy this nuisance. In proportion as advertisements became more abundant, and the sale of papers increased,—both of which would result from a reduction in the rate of the two duties,—publishers would be less

restrained by pecuniary motives from exposing those daily frauds, by which the public journals, for the last twenty years, have derived no inconsiderable profit. It would then be as much the interest of a writer to reprobate such impositions, as it is at present to wink at them. The circulation of his paper would of itself indemnify him for the loss; and if that were insufficient, the increase of advertisements would make up more than the difference. He would then, by the independence of the Press, get rid of much that is a disgrace to it. The stigma that foreigners can with truth impute to us, would then be removed,—that those papers that lay claim to the greatest share of liberality and fearlessness of official censure and prosecution, and who can set an information at defiance, and laugh alike at threats from courts and from magistrates, receive the base bribes of medicine-venders and money-jobbers, and dare not arraign the jugglery by which they impose upon and rob the common people, for fear of losing their dishonourable patronage by the withdrawment of their sickening and often obscene paragraphs!

But we do not wish to go too far. When we said three-pence halfpenny for a newspaper in England, we went to the extreme. We mean to allow a moiety still to the king's exchequer: for example, as much as will carry the papers through the post-office, and leave a small surplus to the public exigencies. One penny per sheet, and one shilling duty upon each advertisement, will be sufficient for this. By such reduction, and by the increase of sale to the old, and the establishment of new newspapers, in various parts of the country; as well as by the increase of advertisements, which, of the smaller kind, would be very considerable; the public might be supplied with the best conducted journal in England or Scotland at the moderate cost of four-pence: while the lesser order of advertisements might be profitably inserted for two and sixpence, or from that to four shillings and sixpence, instead of from six shillings to nine and sixpence, as at present. All this, we venture to assert, might be effected without the gross amount of the revenue in that department being materially, if any thing, diminished.

By the returns of the Stamp Office of the number of stamps issued in Great Britain, in 1821, and the amount of revenue arising therefrom, it appears that the number issued amounted to 24,779,786, and the revenue to 412,996*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.* sterling. We propose to reduce the rates by which this sum is realized 75 per cent.; the consequence of which would be, that, at the *present* extent of circulation, the duty would amount to no more than 103,249*l.* 2*s.* 2*d.* sterling. But the calculation is, that the sale of papers would increase at least threefold. The returns would, therefore, stand thus:—the number of stamps issued would be 74,339,358; and the gross revenue, at only *one penny* each sheet, would amount to 309,747*l.* 6*s.* 6*d.* sterling; being short of the sum stated in the returns for 1821, only 103,249*l.* 2*s.* 2*d.* But, upon the principle of this calculation, the deficiency would not be so great. The returns for 1821 are stated inaccurately: they make the duty on each newspaper sheet amount to four-pence, when it is known that the Stamp Offices allow a discount off

this of 20 per cent. Take 20 per cent. off 412,996*l.* 8*s.* 8*d.*, and the net revenue will amount to no more than 330,397*l.* 2*s.* 11½*d.* The difference, therefore, upon the calculation will be but 20,649*l.* 16*s.* 5½*d.* a trifle not worthy of consideration, when compared with the benefits which would arise from an unshackled and unmercenary Press.*

But the probability is, that the sale of newspapers at the reduced stamp duty would be quadrupled. An amazing increase in the number of those works usually termed literary, (upon what special grounds we know not,) and which fall not under the description of newspapers, would take place. These are sold in the metropolis on unstamped paper; and many of them are transmitted to its neighbourhood by the coaches, not having the privilege of stamped newspapers, of being transmitted post free. At a distance, however, from London, the carriage by the coaches becomes expensive, dilatory, sometimes, and irregular. Those persons, there-

* For these Parliamentary Returns see end of the Volume.

fore, who have a taste for such works, generally procure stamped copies, which are sent through the post-office. Their price, which is seldom less than ten-pence or a shilling, necessarily limits their consumption; and there are thousands of readers in various parts of the kingdom, who, could such works be transmitted through the post-office for sixpence or seven-pence, would instantly become subscribers to one or other of the Literary Gazettes, Chronicles, Mirrors, Museums, &c. &c. The increased sale of these weekly publications would directly enhance the public revenue. To these we might add an innumerable list of cheap magazines, calculated for the meridian of artisans, and which are industriously circulated, and some of them greedily bought by those classes within the bills of mortality. Could such publications be expeditiously transmitted to the larger towns of the kingdom, they would find ready purchasers. To these we might also add dramatic criticisms, and various other ephemeral productions, of which few, if any, are seen or heard of in the country; but which would, among a spe-

cial class of readers, soon obtain repute and encouragement. From those sources the means of increasing the number of stamped publications are almost inexhaustible. So far from being too sanguine in estimating the increase from one to four, we may safely say it would exceed that ratio. Here therefore, *at once*, is an easy way of benefiting the public revenue, and satisfying the demand of all classes of the population for publications, a vast majority of which are only heard of by name; and of mingling with the circulating politics of the day, theories and systems of a more harmless kind; and of rendering the testy disputes of poets and poetesses as wholesome sudorifics to the inflammatory arguments of opposite statesmen, upon the dry details of foreign bulletins and state papers.

Neither would the public revenue suffer from the lowering of the advertisement duty from 3s. 6d. to 1s. The Times newspaper, according to the Stamp Office returns, published in 1821 about 86,000 advertisements; for which the proprietors paid for duty 14,570*l.* 2s. This is the greatest advertising vehicle in Britain. We do

not say that a reduction in the duty would send either three or four times as many advertisements to that office; but we have not a doubt that the number of advertisements would increase throughout the kingdom three or four-fold. To effect this it is not necessary that the number of persons advertising, or articles advertised, should augment so many times; for it is plain that, if the price were reduced, the notices would appear more frequently in proportion to the reduction. Various notices, besides, would be sent to the public journals, that in the country are only confined to a printed label, and distributed on the streets and highways; or are made public by the more antiquated mode of proclamation at the church-doors on a Sunday, or exhibited in written characters on some contiguous post or pillar. All these notices would, for the first time, contribute a shilling to the state exchequer.

It is the duty of every just government not only to enlarge the boundaries of human knowledge but also to extend the means of human sustenance. The policy we contend for, relative to

the Press, is well suited to promote both. Upon a fair calculation, there are no less than forty-six thousand individuals employed in, or dependant upon, the printing and publishing of newspapers in Britain alone. This includes persons of capital, whose sole or chief income is derived from the profits of these establishments; as well as editors, master printers, translators, correspondents at home and abroad, paper-makers, reporters, clerks, news-agents, news-gatherers of various kinds, compositors, pressmen, keepers of news-rooms, &c., &c., and their families. Were the publishing of newspapers forbidden, or merely suspended for a short period, thirty thousand of these persons would instantly be thrown on their parishes; and in the same ratio, were the restrictions removed that paralyse the efforts of the Press and limit the circulation of papers, we have no hesitation in affirming, that thirty thousand additional individuals might honestly and industriously derive their support from the increased consumption that would speedily ensue.

CHAPTER VI.

IN Ireland the stamp duty on each newspaper is twopence,—the cost of the paper from one penny farthing to three halfpence. These make the price of the single sheet, before it has undergone the process of printing, to amount to about three-pence halfpenny ; which is printed and published sometimes for four-pence, but generally for five-pence.

In that unfortunate country, where ignorance plays its fantastic tricks unscared and unpunished, the ministrations of the Press are paramountly necessary, and, in the opinion of many sensible and experienced statesmen, are even entitled to a bounty. We are prepared to go as far as possible, in legislating for the encouragement of the public Press, and the diffusion of

knowledge ; and we should, most probably, have acquiesced in the proposal of tendering such adventitious aid to the Irish newspapers, but from one circumstance, which every person conversant with the affairs of that kingdom must have less or more observed :—we mean the low ebb of both periodical literature and mechanical science in that kingdom. It is a mistaken notion to think that a bounty will have the effect of advancing the arts, or improving the taste of the mass of the inhabitants of Ireland. So far as the newspaper Press is concerned, the Irish have enjoyed a bounty for the last fifty years ; and we venture to assert, that although, during the greater part of that period, a very inconsiderable number of either English or Scotch newspapers found their way there, from the difference betwixt the cost of those published in Britain and those published in Ireland, still little or no improvement has taken place in the composition or in the general appearance of an Irish journal. In this department of the arts, the half-civilized natives of the Western States of America excel the descendants of the O'Con-

nors and O'Connell's. By putting the Irish papers on the same footing with the English, their present price will not only be reduced, but the admission of English newspapers into the kingdom will stir up exertion and the spirit of rivalry among the native journalists, which no bounty, however great, will excite. The printers of that kingdom will not only be compelled to introduce the improvements of the London Press into the mechanical department; but the proprietors and editors of Irish periodicals will discover the necessity of furnishing their readers with specimens of intellectual attainments, more adapted to the age than those they have for a long reign, and on some recent occasions, exhibited. Rivalship would soon promote improvement. The paper itself would speedily become better, so would the ink, so would the execution of the press-work; the printer would soon be induced to study the recognized orthography of the schools; or, if that should be impracticable, he would find it expedient to relinquish a profession for which he is unqualified. Besides, it would not be a daily occurrence to see arti-

cles of a few lines with grammatical errors in every sentence.

Such policy, while it would tend to encourage the arts, would also serve to further the progress of information among the people of Ireland. Such a measure would be one step towards their amelioration; it would be a sure harbinger of the long wished-for hour of "Ireland's redemption." It would lay the foundation-stone of a period of happiness and prosperity yet to come; it would serve to chase away the ignorance that afflicts, as well as the superstition that degrades Ireland. It is in vain to attempt governing a people by the mild laws of England, the great mass of whom are steeped in ignorance to the very lips; to whom instinct has given the faculties of being cunning and shrewd and inquisitive even to a proverb, but who, so far as education and general knowledge are blessings, are living unblessed by the one, and perfect strangers to the other. It is a mere mockery of political science to attempt ameliorating the condition of the peasantry of that country, without commencing with some system

of education, which neither priest nor levite shall *dare* to obstruct. Give the common people the use of their own faculties; let no earthly edict, civil or religious, interpose between man and the exercise of that reason which the living God has given him; and declare it felony in any individual, Jew, Mahometan, or Roman Catholic, who shall directly or indirectly, and upon what pretence soever, prevent or restrict the humblest peasant in the State, from reading, thinking, and judging for himself,—and more beneficial effects will result to Ireland, in a few years, than legislators have done for her these three centuries.

In a work of this kind, more devoted to the investigation of facts than of theories, it may perhaps be irregular to intrude any opinion as to how far the religious sentiments, or rather the ecclesiastical polity, of the sister Island, affects the education of the people and the freedom of the Press: and neither would we intrude any such opinion, could the best interests of Ireland be otherwise fairly discussed. But they cannot. We quarrel with no man's faith or religious

education, if these do not interfere with national prosperity. But when it is matter of public notoriety, that the discipline of the Irish Roman Catholic Church does so interfere with the education—not with the faith, but the information—not with the spiritual, but with the temporal instruction, and consequently with the peace and welfare of the people,—silence is an abandonment of duty.

We will not here stop to inquire what is the conduct of the Roman Catholic clergy in foreign States; nor shall we wait to examine that Church's creed, catechisms, or edicts, acted upon or recognized in Ireland. We have here to grapple with facts; and so long as we can drag these into our argument, we dispense with stale documentary evidence and analogical deductions.

Well, then, do the Catholic clergy of Ireland obstruct the diffusion of knowledge, or do they not? Do they believe that the dignity, influence and security of their ancient Church are to be more or less promoted by the degree of information reposed in the

common people, and by the ignorance in which they are held ; or do they believe the reverse ?

One who is unacquainted with the condition of the great bulk of the population of Ireland,—who has had no opportunity of prying into the arcana of Popish priestcraft, through all its winding ramifications, in that hapless country ; and who, consequently, has had no fair chance of being qualified to estimate with justice the many speeches and statements made in Parliament and elsewhere,—will be inclined to think the Catholic clergy a persecuted and calumniated body ; and that the reply to these questions ought to be decidedly and unequivocally in their favour. Let such persons, however, if they be not members or partisans of the Church of Rome, reside in the kingdom for a few months, and they will come to a very different conclusion. We maintain it fearlessly and conscientiously, that the clergy and ecclesiastical emissaries of the Romish Church are the bane and the curse of that valuable Island : they are a mildew to its welfare ; they are a

pernicious and destructive blight upon the energies of its population.

It is not the poverty of the peasant that destroys all moral apprehension in him ;--it is his gross ignorance, and its ally, blind credulity. His poverty is the *consequence* of his ignorance, not the *cause* of it. His crimes are the result of insidious and malignant misrepresentations on a superstitious mind. We concede it is the crimes and the exasperating feuds of the Irish labourer, that not only prevent the investment of foreign capital in the soil, but which actually drive Irish capital from its legitimate employment. But these crimes and these feuds are the result of that state of bigotry and intolerance, by which the ministrations of the Press are limited ; and of that state of devoted ignorance which the Romish priest cherishes as essential to the influence and existence of his Church. From this cause the worst prejudices of the peasantry of Ireland never die : they are called into fruition too often to be forgotten ; and so often, we may say, that at this day every bad feeling that owes its origin to a period of barbarism is,

from the influence of the priesthood and their inferior missionaries,—as much alive, and rankles with as much fury in the bosom of the misguided peasant, as it did a hundred years ago. The face of the country has undergone improvement, but the peasant is the same. He may have learned the names of his letters, but that is all. In some instances he *can* read; but, alas! what does he read? He sometimes thinks, but how often is he forbidden to do so? The priest holds not his conscience only, but his *corpus*, in chains. He cannot extricate himself from the narrow magic circle he has drawn around him. He not only lays an embargo upon his reason; and denies to his mind the contemplation of the Deity in whatever form he has thought it good to present himself in his works; but he also stands between man and knowledge—between his fellow-man as an illiterate animal, and every ray of intelligence calculated to enlighten and improve him. The priest crosses his every path; he meets him at every chink and crevice at which the mind sallies forth to reclaim itself; he frowns every internal aspiration into silence;

he blasts his hopes by arousing his fears ; and he chases alike from his cabin and his conscience every book and every sentiment, by the terrors of an eternal perdition.

We say that the wretched state of Ireland, and the duration of that wretchedness, proceed from the deplorable ignorance of the labouring population ; and that this state of ignorance is mainly attributable to the conduct of the clergy of the Church of Rome, and to the tenacious adherence of their laity to all the exploded and rancorous prejudices of a past age. Our opinion is founded upon personal observation ; upon facts and circumstances communicated to us by resident and intelligent gentry in various parts of the kingdom ;—by persons born and educated upon the Irish soil ; as well as by individuals, not natives of the country, nor connected with any of the political parties that divide it, but who nevertheless have acquired property and respectability by the industry and enterprise, in many instances, of upwards of twenty years. We have collected our information on the spot, uninfluenced by either Orange-

men or Ribbonmen. We have seen the picture we describe ; and we have heard those intolerant principles, which take cognizance of the human intellect, and not only strike at the root of all security in a country, and all instruction and independence among its people, but have actually held the human species in the most abject state of slavery and degradation wherever they have been propagated—whether in Old Spain or the Italian States, whether in Portugal or in Germany ;—these principles, we say, we have heard avowed and *defended* in Ireland.

We know the manner in which our evidence will be received ; we can guess the epithets that will be applied, and the “gangs” and “banditti” to which we will be said to belong. We heed them not. Those gusts of meretricious eloquence, or of interested or hired declamation, pass us unnoticed as the idle wind. Truth will triumph eventually ; and we have nothing to fear, when in support of our charges and opinions, if they require any support, we could produce at any bar the testimony of individuals unconnected with the church, or with

any official department in the state, and unshackled by the oaths or the enmities of any society or association whatever. We will tender the solemn evidence of these men, that Ireland will never advantageously know the blessings of a free country, or experience the benefits of a free press,—and that she will never emerge from the state of barbarism and superstition she is in,—so long as Popery holds so much domination over the mind of the majority of her inhabitants, or so long as the insidious emissaries of that persuasion retain the power of opposing or frustrating the instruction of the poor.

The next consideration is, how could the public Press be made to bear upon this ocean of ignorance? There is no way by which this could be effected, till the lower classes in Ireland are first taught to read. Give them this qualification, *and give the mind its liberty*, and the Press will do the rest. The desire to pry into history, and to be made acquainted with the arts and sciences—with the powers of mechanism and the flights of philosophy—is the

strongest desire of the human breast. Give the untutored mind the means of communing with these subjects, and they will be diligently pursued. The bars of the mental prison, however, must first be burst asunder. The mind must be free: it must not be tied down to any limits;—it may be directed, but it must not be restricted;—it may be advised, but it must not be compelled;—the way may be pointed out, but the lash or the rack must not be applied: else, the end is defeated. Restrict the influence of the Catholic clergy, and relieve their adherents from the bondage in which their faculties are held, and a new era will commence, of liberty and information, and of all their concomitant blessings. Let it not be imagined we are seeking the revival of penal statutes against the Catholics. We dread the Inquisition too much to advise the erection even of a protestant one. But a free Government is more naturally the guardian of the people's education than any of the sects or parties under it. A free Government is not a just Government, if it does not tolerate every mode of religious worship. But

education is not worship—knowledge is not religion. There is a line to be drawn between what the State ought to permit, and what a sect may claim. For instance, a society of men might take it into their heads to worship the sun, or the moon, or both, as the sources of all light and life and enjoyment; and, in the propagation of their opinions, might not only think it proper to forbid to their followers the perusal of all books that commended another creed, but, to render the prohibition more effectual, might inculcate as a duty the reading of all such blasphemous and antichristian publications as insulted or maligned whatever or whoever was sacred to Christians. Would this be tolerated? or would it be *just* in any Government to tolerate such conduct? In England the publication of such books is a trespass punishable by fine and imprisonment; and in Scotland by transportation beyond seas. Here, therefore, the Government draw the line of demarcation between what they conceive to be toleration and what they conceive to be *intolerable*. And they do so justly. There must be a power stronger

than either church or sectarian influence. Wherever precepts are inculcated injurious to morality, or repugnant to civil liberty and free and dispassionate discussion, the interference of the Government is necessary. We ask, therefore, for no reanimation of the penal statutes, long since obsolete, against Roman Catholics; but, by the rules of civil polity, we submit that the interference of the Roman Catholic clergy, with the right which every liege subject of the king has to acquire such knowledge and instruction as he chooses, is as repugnant to the laws and institutions of England, as would be the insane conduct of the “fire-worshippers” alluded to. What is the birth-right of every liege subject of the king of Great Britain and Ireland? The right of thought—the right of judgment and reflection. This is the most invaluable guarantee which a free Government can give to a people: it is the first principle of liberty; it is the first article in the treaty between the high contracting parties, the *rulers* and the *ruled*; by which alone the *bona fide* act of manumission is consummated: it is the signal at

which the slave breaks his chains, and treads the earth a free man.

And this principle is recognised in the constitutional code of England. But our complaint is, that it is not enforced. The creed of the Church of Rome sets it at defiance; and there is not a clergyman of that sect, however humble, or however illiterate, but every day treads upon it with supercilious scorn. Six millions—for that is the magic number so often rung in our ears—six millions of our fellow-subjects partake of none of the advantages it confers. The right of thought is denied by a powerful sect, who, while they refuse to recognise the exercise of the principle in their plebeian members, claim, upon the high ground of civil liberty, an unconstitutional boon for their patrician adherents!

Till the constitutional liberty of England is meted out justly to all ranks and conditions of men, and till the priesthood of Rome concedes to the poor what they demand for the rich, the woes of unhappy Ireland will never be eradicated. The benefits arising from the liberty of the Press will not be felt or appreciated, till

some such change is effected. If time could do it, happy would we be to sit quietly under our vine till its accomplishment. But accidental circumstances are feeble opponents to the hosts and bulwarks of Popery. The Press may fight its way and acquire a precarious strength under the present difficulties ; but till some such happy moral revolution is consummated, and the sentiments and ideas of the Irish peasantry undergo an entire transition, neither mild nor coercive measures will have any effect in making the “ six millions” an active, honest, industrious, or contented population.

CHAPTER VII.

THE newspaper Press of London is unrivalled by any similar establishment in the world. In point of literary talent and mechanical execution, it is an honour to the British empire. The Press of the United States of America will bear no comparison with it; and the Parisian one, so far from equalling that of London, is not, by many degrees, equal to the provincial Press of Ireland.* In London there are from fifty to

* The first newspaper that appeared in the present single-sheet form in England, was called "The Public Intelligencer," and was published by Sir Roger L'Estrange on the 31st August, 1661. But there were, long prior to this period, publications that suited the same purpose, though printed in a different shape. As far back as the reign of Elizabeth, in 1588, was published "The

sixty different newspapers. The number varies, as many start into existence, and run perhaps the career of but a few weeks ; but some of them have been established for upwards of a century, others from forty to fifty years, although the greater proportion have come into being since the period of the French Revolution. Much of the prosperity and greatness of England is to be dated from that era. Commercial enterprize received an impetus from the war,

English *Mercurie*," in the shape of a pamphlet, the first number of which is still preserved in the British Museum. These sort of pamphlets became fashionable in the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, but they became more rare in the reign of James I. During the interesting war of Gustavus Adolphus, king of Sweden, they were once more revived ; for in 1622 we find "The Newes of the Present Week," by Nathaniel Butler ; "The *Mercurius Britannicus*," in 1626 ; "The German *Intelligencer*" in 1630 ; and "The Swedish *Intelligencer*" in 1631, which was compiled by the learned William Watts of Caius College. These periodicals were all severally produced to gratify the interest which was excited by the fortunes of the intrepid Gustavus.

The English rebellion of 1641 gave rise to many more

unexampled in the history of any nation. Manufactures, especially cotton manufactures, only in their infancy at the commencement of the Revolution, reached almost a state of perfection during the continental devastations that followed. Newspapers increased with the national prosperity and independence. Each passing event daily became more interesting, and the desire to obtain early intelligence became the stronger. This is demonstrable from the following table

of these tracts, which, during the time of the long Parliament, were principally filled with violent appeals to the people, suited to the violence and the hypocrisy of the period, and intended to justify the proceedings of the legislature towards their constituents, the soldiery and the multitude. Many of these tracts bore the title of "Diurnal Occurrences of Parliament." These, however, were entirely superseded by the establishment of "The Public Intelligencer," in 1661. In 1665 "The London Gazette" commenced: it was at first published at Oxford, and called "The Oxford Gazette." "The Orange Intelligencer" was the third newspaper, and the first after the Revolution in 1688. In 1696 there appear to have been nine London papers published weekly, although the last-mentioned seems to have been the only

of the number of newspapers published within the United Kingdoms at three distinct periods, the earliest only forty-two years ago.

	1782.	1790.	1821.
Newspapers published in England	50 -	60 -	135
_____ Scotland	8 -	27 -	31
_____ Ireland	3 -	27 -	56
_____ daily in London	9 -	14 -	16
_____ twice a week do.	9 -	7 -	8
_____ weekly do.	0 -	11 -	32
_____ British Islands	0 -	0 -	6
	<u>79</u>	<u>146</u>	<u>284</u>

By this it appears that the total number of political journals in England, Scotland, Ire-

daily one. In Queen Anne's reign, in 1709, their number was increased to eighteen, but still there was but one daily paper, "The London Courant." In the reign of George I. the number was augmented to three daily, six weekly, and ten¹ three times a-week. In the reign of George II. the number of copies of newspapers published in the whole of England was as follows :—

In 1753 — 7,411,757

— 1760 — 9,464,790

land, and the British Islands, has augmented three times in the short space of about forty years. The difference is not so great with respect to the English metropolis; for although in 1782 there were only eighteen papers published, nine of these were daily ones, and the remaining nine twice a-week ones, producing in all seventy-two weekly ones; whereas in 1821, the increase in daily newspapers was from nine to sixteen, the decrease in twice a-week from nine to eight, and the increase of weekly, of which none appear to have been published in 1782, was thirty-two: the difference, therefore, in the proportion of weekly newspapers between these periods, being only what seventy-two is to one hundred and forty-four, or exactly one half. This, to be sure, is not a fair criterion of their increase, as the number of copies sold in the last period must have doubled the number sold in the first period. It shews, however, the state of the market, and the circumstances, so far as public feeling was involved, under which the proprietors of these journals thought such speculations prudent. There are still thirteen daily

papers published in London; seven thrice a-week, nine twice a-week, (six of which, however, can only be said to be second *editions* of the same papers,) and twenty-three weekly. It appears that these journals circulated in 1821, 16,254,534 copies; for the stamp-duty upon which, there was paid to the Stamp Office the sum of 270,908*l.* 18*s.* sterling!

It is not the least extraordinary feature of this literary phalanx, that, on a fair calculation of the number of copies sold in town and country, two-thirds of its vast strength are directed against the opinions of the leading official men under the Crown, and the general measures of his Majesty's Ministers. This has been the case for many years. It is one of the blemishes of a free Government to permit, and in some measure to countenance, the propagation of discontent. It is a discontent, however, that speaks out—that gets breath, and thereby divests itself of much that is deleterious in its composition. Every fatality, therefore, that befalls the country is ascribed by the people to the misconduct of the executive. The petty politician is some-

thing like a living magnet that points perpetually to evil. All his forebodings and all his prophetic day-dreams terminate in wrath to come; and every public extremity which unlooked-for circumstances, or even the inclemency of the weather, had produced, is charged to the *debit* of the Minister, and faithfully entered in the ledger of the public as so much discernment to the *credit* of the political seer in low life. This fretting at—this perpetual, puny opposition to the acts of public men—is to be expected and endured under every Administration. And really it is productive of little injury, when confined within reasonable boundaries. It is the truth to say it is generally so confined. The mischiefs of party have rarely had any other than a mere local effect. On various occasions of public alarm it was easy to perceive that a great part of the Press stood in awe of their own doings, and seemed to afford a reluctant and extorted acquiescence to transactions which they had, to a certain extent, patronized. On other occasions of delicacy, we have observed, among the more reputable of the journals, a praiseworthy deference to personal

feelings, and a disposition to animadvert with moderation and temperance upon matters imprudently, perhaps, exposed to the public eye.

But we are ready to confess, that, when we speak of moderation and delicacy, we speak only by comparison; for it must be admitted that there have been seasons, and that lately, when the “gentlemen of the Press”—the guardians of British morals—gave their worst of thoughts the worst of words; when, (if the public journals are to be taken in evidence,) every kindlier sympathy of the human breast seemed to be lost in the animosities of contending factions—and when the usual salutations of friendship, upon the street, were drowned in the vulgar outpourings of a drunken and incensed rabble. London has of recent years had its Gordon, Burdett, Wardle, Spafields, Corn-bill, and Queen Caroline, and other lesser *riots*; all of which were attended with danger, and many of them with loss of lives and property, and in all of which the Press took an active part. On these occasions, and especially at the late Queen’s funeral, the insolence of the populace, and the de-

terminated manner in which they baffled the designs of Ministers, and set law and decency at defiance, was not more deservedly the object of censure and correction, than was the language of unmeasured denunciation poured out by the opposition journals against the Government. In reference to that unhappy affair, a Morning Paper at the time made some observations which are worthy of a place here.

“ An awful day has closed for this Metropolis: a day of alarm and of tumult; of contempt for all civil authority, of open defiance to the military—of sacrilege and of bloodshed. The dark prophecies addressed to the Earl of Liverpool have been illustrated and realised. They were not the vain dreams of female imagination: they had been dictated by those who intended to give them effect, and were meant to intimidate, not to warn. ‘ Mischief and bloodshed ’ have indeed ensued; but whence did that mischief originate, and through whom has that blood been shed? Let the perverters of the public Press, the corrupters of the people, the enemies to all that is valuable in the Constitution,

and sacred in Religion, give an answer, and if it could be an honest one, they must convict themselves. The doctrines which they have so long and so industriously disseminated among the lower orders, the misrepresentations which they have put forth, the falsehoods which they have uttered, have at last produced their natural fruits. The seed was scattered on all the winds; the ground now proves its fertility, and the harvest promises to be abundant. Surely those who have employed every power of their minds and every hour of their political existence in sapping the foundations of public morals and public order, will not start with affected incredulity at the fatal consequences of their delusions. They will not pretend that blood was not in their thoughts, because it had not stained their hands! They will not say that they meant peace and good will to all men, when they breathed resistance to lawful authority, sedition and outrage into every breast within the circle of their baneful influence! But what can be expected of their conscience, after what we have seen of their truth, their justice, and their

patriotism? On this, as on all other occasions, they will make misrepresentation or direct falsehood their shield. They will say that to violate the sacredness of the dead, and to turn the solemnities of a funeral into a scene of political frenzy, of outrage, and of conflict, was an act of virtue and devotion. They will represent the blind and misguided beings who, emboldened by impunity, and mindful of the advice so often impressed upon them to appeal to physical power, compelled the military to fire in self-defence, as lambs immolated in their innocence and harmlessness. They will charge men who bore with unyielding temper the insults and the peltings of lawless multitudes till battle itself was given them, and forbearance would have become destruction—they will charge those men with a wanton eagerness to engage. But the country will not be deceived by representations such as these. She will feel what awful responsibility was laid on the military, and what outrages were prevented by their firmness. She will see that, had there been no force to resist the popular violence, excited and previously organized by

the factious, the object of carrying the remains of her Majesty through the city, would soon have been abandoned for others of a nature widely different, and far more congenial to the wishes and principles of the secret leaders in this monstrous attempt to lay all civil and legal authority at the feet of physical power. However she may regret the loss of lives which has taken place, she will know by whom it has been occasioned. She will deplore the blindness as well as the fate of the sufferers, and if a malediction should escape her, it will fall on those who taught them to offend and betrayed them to their ruin."

But, thank God ! these extremes of popular outrage occur but seldom. The Press on few occasions has been so daring. Its sensations and disputes are generally more testy than vindictive ; they are more calculated to excite a smile, than force a tear ; and better and more wisely calculated to call forth a humorous, or an abortive humorous reply, than the sullen and spiritless grumblings of anger or revenge.

The advocates of ministerial policy, though

fewer in number, are not less able or alert than their opponents. Perhaps, to do them justice, we ought to say they are *at present* more able than their rivals; but whether or not, they labour under disadvantages evidently hurtful to them. They have rarely the same extent of readers as the opposition papers, and they are victims to the shifting patronage of new ministers, to individual jealousy, and to silly claims to priority of foreign and domestic intelligence, and official information. While their opponents are united against them, they are divided among themselves. But it by no means happens that the apparent division of the conductors of the Press into two grand and opposite conclaves, is any obstacle to the publication of that infinity of opinions on all political subjects, which are characteristic of the inhabitants of a free country. Of the twenty-six London journals opposed to Ministers, the majority of them agree upon no other topic but *that* opposition. The opinions of these range from the extreme of democracy to those of the Whig aristocracy. While one supports the principle of annual parliaments

and universal suffrage, another affects to prefer only triennial parliaments, a moderate reform in the House of Commons, and certain leaders of their party to be the advisers of his Majesty. Each one has his system, and his patron. This one can see no remedy for the discontents, or supposed discontents, of the people, but in such a change as will give power and patronage to the multitude at large—to the voice of numbers rather than to the influence of property and respectability. This other one, more moderate, or desirous to appear more prudent and consistent, has no objection to be content with a less fiery and dangerous purgation, provided it be such a one as will turn the present men out and let another set (names and surnames, titles, &c., all modestly mentioned) IN. A third steers upon a different tack, and without having any stubborn fellow-feeling for one class of ministers more than another, follows, rather than leads, the sentiments of the populace. This is the Cocker system; those rule-of-three politics, which are only found to be the most expedient, in proportion as the expenditure, when

subtracted from the receipts, leaves the greater or less quotient to each patriotic shareholder. There are others who meekly disclaim all party prepossessions, and all violence of debate, and all personality of attack or allusion. Instead of violence, *energy* is a better term; for in the laudable desire of being beyond censure, they are equally beyond praise. They are silent *no-sides*, that generally pass for ministerial, more from the long well-paid advertisements that emanate from the several public offices, and adorn their frontispiece, than from any effort on their part to do good or evil. They are harmless truckling things that few read, and none talk about. They come with the tea-ware in the morning, and soon descend to the kitchen and the scullery, and are never more heard of.

The opinions advocated by these antiministerial, and, in many instances, antimonarchical journals, are not only whimsically varied, they are also extremely changeable. Few of them follow longer than a few years the same course of politics. *The Times*, that is at present considered the *city* paper, and which, from its

hostility to the Cabinet, is an indispensable luminary in every tavern and chop-house, was in former times a zealous advocate of the measures of Mr. Pitt. It obtained celebrity by its reprobation of republican principles—the ambitious conquests of Bonaparte—and its daily defence of the conduct of the British Ministry in relation to these events. In short, till 1815 it was all loyalty and devotion. But at that period the “Corn bill,” which then passed the legislature, was, with all persons employed in manufactures, and those not directly interested in obtaining a high price for grain, considered an impolitic measure. The populace were in a state of alarm at the supposed inevitable consequences of high prices for corn, and petitions, replete with remonstrances, poured into Parliament from all parts of the kingdom. In these circumstances, the proprietors of *The Times* saw the pecuniary advantages that would arise from opposing the measure. The fiery tirades which it then levelled at the bill caught the public eye — warmed the already irritated passions of the populace, and attracted towards *itself* a

corresponding return of gratitude. Remembrances of that sort, from the public, are encouraging in the extreme ; and ever since, the Times has valorously fought on the side of “ the people.” The people ! This, we confess, is rather an unintelligible term, which means, in its most legitimate sense, that source of remuneration which is found most productive—or, as Dr. Adam Smith would have expressed it, which gives the greatest possible return with the least possible risk, from the least possible capital.

But although this “ leading journal” makes a virtue of ebbing and flowing with the popular tide, it has merits, which, in justice, we cannot help noticing. Its parliamentary reports have invariably been the best in London. Whatever speech it has attempted to report, that speech has got ample justice done it. It has served up no minced-meat from the House of Commons, in which honourable members felt it impossible to recognize themselves ; and it is a pity that, with such qualifications, it should be so cumbered with advertisements, as to be unable, except at a dreadful sacrifice, to do the same justice to

all the proceedings in that house, which it has given such ample proof it can do when inclined. Besides, the connexions of this print abroad are extensive, and it was wont to furnish foreign intelligence, often of an important kind, long before any of its contemporaries. It has fallen off in this respect of late, we admit, but not too far to prevent a renewal of its former exertions.

Next to the cockney oracle, on the same side, is the *Morning Chronicle*, the avowed and admitted champion of the Whig aristocracy. It owes its origin and its fame to the late Mr. Perry, one of those germs of the North who, like their native Aurora Borealis, constantly shoot southwards. This gentleman wrote his paper into celebrity, and himself into affluence, and died an honest man in the cause he had advocated. For upwards of thirty years the *Chronicle* has been written *for* the Whigs, and *against* placemen, pensioners, and taxes—weak ministers and unconstitutional measures—always excepting, however, the few months during which its patrons were in power. In that happy, short period, the *Chronicle* gave a truce to its

grievances, and forgot corruption and the red-book, amid the sunshine of royal and ministerial munificence. The Ministry of 1806, however, had but a short-lived existence, having no more than tasted the sweets of office, when they were superseded. They perished, as it were, in their non-age, and the golden dreams of their adherents, a very numerous and hopeful train in all the gradations of society, were dissipated. The old whistle had to be piped afresh, and war, taxes, and extravagance—reform and retrenchment, have been the favourite airs of the journalist ever since.

Since the death of Mr. Perry the establishment has fallen into new hands. It is not now bound by the same ties to my Lord Grey and his followers; its popularity has undergone a change; and if it be not evidently going down hill, the long, tedious, leaden, and lifeless articles, that day after day clog its pages, are sufficiently *heavy* for that purpose. A large sum has been paid for its copyright, which sum, by-the-by, is suspected of being exaggerated; but whether or not, the transaction has been so

puffed and bepraised by extracts from the Edinburgh Review, published (and paid for of course) in almost every journal in the three kingdoms, as cannot fail to have the effect of derogating from the former respectability and independence of the Chronicle. These quackish modes of attracting notice cannot but injure a respectable newspaper. They are always suspicious, and savour strongly of waning fame—of doubtful allegiance to former patrons, and of a latent desire, on the part of its proprietors or writers, to be more regulated by adventitious circumstances than formerly. A newspaper monopolist is not the safest depository of party secrets, nor the likeliest candidate for public confidence. The proprietor of the Chronicle is in this situation. He owns, in addition to it, *The Observer* and *The Englishman*, an interest in the public Press not held by any other individual in England. Blind as the common Whigs are, they will not fail to discover and dread the consequences of such aggrandisement. There can be no motive in adhering to their cause but

a mercenary one. The object is profit, and certain plebeian doctrines are made subservient to the attainment of that object. The Chronicle, under Mr. Perry, was chained to its party—was at the nod of Mr. Fox, and his leading successors; but the Chronicle, under Mr. Clements, is not so shackled—is under no such ties to the party—owes nothing to Earl Grey, my Lord Holland, or Messrs. Brougham, Mackintosh, and Co., and, in consequence, is free to take such a tract as the spirit of the times and the state of parties may dictate. This is all right so far. As a mercantile speculation, (and the Chronicle newspaper can be viewed in no other light) the proprietor is at liberty to sell his commodity to the highest bidder, in the same way as he would sell an adventure upon Russian tallow or Greenland whale oil. The interest of the huge capital sunk must, if possible, be realised; and the instance of another morning paper, raising a larger contribution from its city votaries, than the Chronicle can do from the conjoined forces of the Whig nobility

and gentry, is not likely to induce its proprietor to tender any sworn pledges to the much-harped-on cause of Sidney and of Hampden.

The Morning Herald is another of the journals that combats on the side of the Opposition. The remainder are conceived, by the public, to be of a lower stamp than those we have named, upon what grounds we will not venture to say.

There are five morning papers, the general sentiments of which are hostile to the Cabinet; while there are only two that are favourable to it: these are the *New Times* and *Morning Post*.

The first of these morning ministerial journals had its rise in the dissensions that occurred in the *Old Times*' establishment, relative to the Corn bill, as we have already mentioned. The editor, not falling in with the views of the majority of the proprietors, and not feeling inclined to sacrifice his judgment upon a measure to persons whose passions attributed consequences to it, which it not only never produced, but which it is *now* plain it could not possibly produce, established the *New Times* upon those principles which he has honestly and fearlessly main-

tained till now. This paper, it must be confessed, is better *written* than it is *conducted*. Both its principles and its intelligence are antiquated—its sentiments are loyal and its types are old—the writer is an ultra-Tory, and, on that account, his printing is a sinecure. All his journeymen seem to be on days' wages—and his reporters are evidently paid by the hour, and not by the sheet. If we were to judge by the large size of its capitals, one would set down the *New Times* as under the influence of Dr. Adam, and its circulation limited to the convalescents of the Ophthalmic Institution. Why should this be?

Notwithstanding all this, it is the second best ministerial daily paper in the Metropolis. Its information is generally authentic, although sometimes inclining to be stale. This, perhaps, arises more from a desire to display caution in directing or misleading public credulity upon important subjects, than from any deficiency of official information. But, upon the whole, there is no chance of this paper ever becoming a favourite, even with its own party. The editor is

too much a civilian—he is too subtle a casuist—too deeply read in black-letter and cathedral legends, to be an open, lively, plain-speaking English constitutionalist. He carries the monarchical principle too far. He is too great a stickler for legitimacy; so much so, that had Charles Stuart, the Pretender, been alive, Dr. Stoddart would have been a traitor to the House of Hanover upon his own principles.

But, despite of this, there is not in London a publication that is more deserving of an occasional perusal than *The New Times*; and it is to be regretted that it should be so little known—not to speak of the provinces where it is seldom met with—but in the capital itself, where few houses take it in, where it can be seen by persons in the middle or lower walks of society. It is very generally circulated, nevertheless, among persons of a higher sphere. It reaps a good harvest at the west end of the town, where some of its contemporaries are never seen, and partakes of no stinted share of the benedictions, as well as the tythes, of the dignified clergy. The editor understands the

machinery of the church well, and turns his knowledge, as he is justly entitled to do, to account. It is rather strange, however, that he should preserve the rights of the mitre with the one hand, and fight for Father Milner with the other. Perhaps there is a sympathetic chord that binds the ultra advocates of legitimacy and popery together.

Of *The Morning Post* we have exceedingly little to say. It is more the paper of the *beau monde* than of the political world. It is, however, written with moderation—is respectably if not superiorly printed, and in other respects is conducted with prudence and propriety.

The Courier is, without exception, the most ingenious and best conducted newspaper in London. It throws nine-tenths of its competitors at an immeasurable distance, when it chooses to enter the lists with them, whether its task be to detect their errors, laugh at their inconsistencies, or defend a particular measure from their censure. We speak not here of its politics, nor of the men or measures it has chosen to defend, but of the masterly manner in

which it has eddied itself out of many almost insurmountable difficulties ; of its literary tactics ; of its successful manœuvres when at fault, and of its powerful and stinging recriminations upon its opponents when it had truth and sound argument on its side. We have watched this journal closely for several years, and have ever had occasion to admire the felicitous style of its composition, and the ability unceasingly displayed in the management of it. It has for many years fought on the side of the Tory ministry ; but like some of its contemporaries it was once opposed to them. Mr. Canning says in one of his satirical poems, published in 1794, in allusion to this print—

“ *Couriers and Stars*, Sedition’s evening host,
“ *Ye Morning Chronicle and Morning Post*,
“ Whether you make the ‘ Rights of Man’ your theme,
“ Your Country libel and your God blaspheme,”—

from which it is apparent that this leading advocate of Government, in our day, was, at that eventful period, considered one of the constellations of sedition and republicanism. But these are the discrepancies of human nature—the product of times, of seasons, and of circumstances.

Next to the *Courier*, among the evening papers, are *The Globe and Traveller*, *The Star*, *The Sun*, and others, (so says the public,) lesser luminaries, illuminating their own little worlds, and giving life and principle to their own particular systems. *The Sun* has long been ministerial and consistent. It is a firm opponent of Catholic emancipation, and a thick and thin stickler for the insane panaceas of Mr. Robert Owen of New Lanark and his friends. *The Star*, till the accession of Mr. Canning to his present situation, twinkled in the galaxy of radicalism, and during the administration of Pitt, Percival, and Londonderry, was the constant advocate of Parliamentary Reform, and a change of men and measures. Now, however, it shines propitiously on the measures of the staunchest antagonist of all Reform; for what reason, or from what racking of conscience, we will not presume to guess. *The Traveller*, which now has no individual existence, set out an independent advocate for the Tory party; it soon afterwards became a violent declaimer against them, and now it is united with *The Globe*, a paper which was

always reputable from its moderation, and these two conjoined, seem to take the lead of the evening opposition newspapers.

Of the twice or thrice a-week journals very little can be said, except in behalf of *The St. James's Chronicle*, one of the oldest prints in London, which abounds with political and literary intelligence, and although somewhat of the old school, is conducted with moderation, and exhibits on all important subjects, sentiments and animadversions replete with sound sense and impartiality. *The Evening Mail* is a paper manufactured out of the columns of *The Old Times*; and which (chiefly from the soiled types used in the morning in that "leading journal,") retails its transferred intelligence to its country readers. It is little known in London.

The majority of Sunday papers is likewise inimical to the Cabinet. There are about eighteen papers published in London on this day, of which not above three or four can be said to speak favourably of the measures of the Government. *The Examiner*, *Bell's Messenger*, *The*

Observer, *The News*, and *The Sunday Times*, stand highest upon the opposition side. The first of these, however exceptionable may be some of its opinions, and however fastidious and even unmerited may be some of its strictures, is vastly superior to any of its opposition contemporaries in point of talent. On the other side are *The Guardian*, and *The John Bull*, the former a journal of considerable ability, and the latter, known from having raised itself in the course of twelve months to nearly the greatest circulation of the Sunday papers! from its peculiar style of writing; from the severity of its attacks upon the conduct of the late Queen and her friends; from its fearless censure and ridicule of popular meetings, and street orators; from the large sums of money it has been obliged to disburse in consequence of various actions for libel; from the lengthened imprisonment of its conductors in conformity to the different sentences of the court; from its unyielding adherence to the same course of philippic, to the same recklessness of animadversion; from its undiminished watchfulness over every inroad

upon the church or state, upon the rights of the crown, or the suffrages of the people. No writer has in our day entered the lists of weekly politicians, who has been exposed to more censure on the one hand, and praise upon the other, than the unknown writer of this paper. The rank which it holds, the impression that it makes, the eagerness with which it is purchased, the high respectability of many of the persons whose names appear almost weekly in its columns in reference to some of its former observations, sufficiently demonstrate the extent of its circulation, and the deep interest that is felt in whatever the writer chooses to discuss. It is, however, daily denounced as slanderous, stigmatised as vile and personal, and its very prosperity and success are attributed to the undisguised scurrility and abuse with which its pages abound. We confess, however, we can as little see the justice of these remarks, as we can discover any reason why if scurrility and abuse are so successful in this instance, they are not equally so in other instances? *The John Bull* is personal, we admit ; it is bitterly sarcastic in its

criticisms; it is unhesitating and unequivocal in its exposures and in its condemnations. This, we concede, is true. But is newspaper personality confined to *The John Bull*? Are any of the leading daily papers one iota more fastidious in making exposures, or in sneering at public characters? Are they more fearful of wounding private feelings or in tickling the ear of scandal with injurious and unjustifiable rumours? Every day's observation proves the contrary. Their personality perhaps is not conveyed in the same language; it is perhaps more ambiguous; covered, as the elegant author of it will no doubt think, with more light and shade, and consequently better suited for delicate ears, than the bold, unequivocal, and uncompromising language of truth. But is the attack or the censure less venomous if it be false, or more concealed or more innocuous if it be deserved, or if the charge be true, than it is when muffled in the flimsy robe of blank names, tawdry allusions intended to be witty, and a multitude of slang phrases? By no means. An innuendo imputation is as intelligible and as hurtful as a direct

one. If the latter be libellous, the former is equally so. A reputation can be blasted by signs as well as by words : the last is the weapon of the open and fearless opponent ; the first, the stiletto of the masked assassin, which he wears under his mantle, and uses only under cloud of night.

Whatever we may think of other papers, from what we have seen, and from what we daily see in their pages, we cannot accuse the *John Bull* of being a secret or disguised libeller. Whatever is said is said openly, so that he who runs may read ; and we can attribute the favourable manner in which that paper has been received by the public, to nothing so much as to the masterly manner in which it has defended the cause it has espoused, to the justness of its criticisms, and to the well-merited, but withering and crushing severity of its invectives. Indeed, the patronage of the public, and the firmness of its party, rather an unusual circumstance on their part, alone could have enabled its proprietors to bear up against prosecutions more numerous and more severe in their results than were ever

inflicted upon and triumphantly borne by any newspaper company in the same space of time. It has ever been the case, that the author of any successful innovation upon the antiquated forms of his professional competitors, has had to bear all the narrow-minded taunts and secret envy of his contemporaries. This is in some degree natural. The man who excels is the object of jealousy to those, whom he has distanced in his business. Rivalship is as much the mother of invective and eavesdropping as it is twin-brother to improvement and professional excellence. Partly, if not chiefly from this source, come the complaints against the *John Bull* school of writers. He who feels sore from any punishment does not raise the less outcry because it was well merited. When the noise is made by those that do *not* suffer, it proceeds from party sympathy and party enmity. We are told that this is the age of licentiousness in writing,—or rather, to use the words of a Parliamentary barrister, that “the Press is free to a most disgusting and intolerable excess on one side,” (the side of Government of course!) “while the other is

watched and persecuted with unjustifiable rigour!" This is twice false. It is false that periodical writers are more slanderous or personal than they were half a century ago: they are not even so loudly complained of, as we shall shew. It is also false that State prosecutions for libel are pursued with any thing like severity; or that the number of prosecutions is so great as in former, and not very remote periods. During the time the late Attorney-general, Sir Robert Gifford, now Lord Gifford, held that office, he instituted fewer proceedings for libel, than any Attorney-general had done in the same length of time for a century past. In short, the cry against modern personality is the lamentation of discomfited knights of the Press, beaten, we fear, in their own tilt-yard, with their own weapons, in the presence of their own retainers, who, poor souls! are unable to contain their sorrow; or it is only the wail of old men over the changes of the fashions, and who see nothing in their dotage like the good manners, sociality, uprightness, and immaculate virtue of their youth! Such lamentations are indigenous to

every age. The following letter from the celebrated Dr. Goldsmith to the editor of a London paper, dated in 1773, shews that, in the opinion of this author, the Press in his days was as vile, personal, and slanderous, as it is, by persons placed in the same circumstances as the Doctor was, proclaimed to be in ours.

“Lest it should be supposed that I have been willing to correct in others an abuse of which I have been guilty myself, I beg leave to declare, that in all my life I never wrote or dictated a single paragraph, letter, or essay, in a newspaper, except a few moral essays, under the character of a Chinese, about ten years ago, in the Ledger; and a letter, to which I signed my name, in the St. James’s Chronicle. If the liberty of the Press, therefore, has been abused, I have had no hand in it.

“I have always considered the Press as the protector of our freedom; as a watchful guardian, capable of uniting the weak against the encroachments of power. What concerns the public most properly admits of a public discussion. But of late the Press has turned from defending public interest to making inroads upon private life; from combating the strong to overwhelming the feeble. No condition is now too obscure for its abuse, and the protector is become the tyrant of the people. In this manner the freedom of the Press is beginning to sow the seeds of

its own dissolution; the great must oppose it from principle, and the weak from fear, till at last every rank of mankind shall be forced to give up its benefits, content with security from its insults.

“How to put a stop to such licentiousness, by which all are indiscriminately abused, and by which vice consequently escapes in the general censure, I am unable to tell: all I could wish is, that, as the law gives us no protection against the injury, so it should give calumniators no shelter after having provoked correction. The insults which we receive before the public, by being more open, are the more distressing: by treating them with silent contempt, we do not pay a sufficient deference to the opinion of the world. By recurring to legal redress, we too often expose the weakness of the law, which only serves to increase our mortification by failing to relieve us. In short, every man should singly consider himself as a guardian of the liberty of the Press, and, as far as his influence can extend, should endeavour to prevent its licentiousness becoming at last the grave of its freedom.

“OLIVER GOLDSMITH.”

In attending to the younger sons of the Press, we had nearly forgotten the old father of invective, Mr. William Cobbett. This nondescript in literature has had his day; his star is set, his artillery are spiked; and after proving himself

one of the cleverest declaimers in England, one of the most effective corporals that ever led a forlorn hope to the cannon's mouth, or a ragged mob to the doors of a granary, he lives at Kensington, a fallen *brutum fulmen* of the Press !

William Cobbett is one of those *outré* animals that cannot be described. As a writer, his essays, sermons, and speeches; his dissertations upon English grammar and straw-plait, his speculations upon currency and Swedish turnips; set criticism at defiance, and completely bewilder the reader with the versatility of his genius,—or, we should rather say, with the intermixed display of sound sense and insanity with which all his productions abound. There was a time when this extraordinary man was, amongst the lower classes of society, the most popular writer in England. He spoke their sentiments, and in some measure formed them, to his own taste and their entire satisfaction. His happy dexterity at illustration,—at reducing the most abstruse subject to the capacity of the most illiterate reader,—the bluntness and coarseness of his language, combined with its force and its

perspicuity ; made him, with the multitude, the oracle of the day. His “ Register,” the vehicle of his opinions,—or rather, the opinions which he found it convenient to support,—found its way into every news-room of the empire. The tradesman and mechanic devoured his predictions with avidity, as if they had been inspired ; and however dependent was their situation at the time, or however liable they were to become poorer in their circumstances by any revolution or general bankruptcy, they seemed to enjoy him the better, the more firmly and confidently he dilated upon the “ unavoidable and impending” ruin of the nation. He did more than any individual in modern times ever did, to alienate the affections of the uninformed portion of the community from their natural guardians. He cherished the spirit which the French Revolution had engendered ; and he fanned, almost into a general flame, every accidental spark of dissatisfaction which the periodical embarrassments of our merchants, during the late war, were the means of lighting up in the manufacturing districts. For this he was the object of prosecu-

tion by the Government. His attacks were often beyond all fair discussion, and of a tendency which no Minister, however liberal, could pass unpunished. It is rather extraordinary, however, that this Leviathan in politics was never encountered with his own weapons; and that, while so many condemned his conduct and abhorred his sentiments, no one was found qualified to meet him in his own manner, among his own readers. All shrunk from the task. Some of his contemporaries occasionally noticed him; laughed, perhaps, at his blunders, or his thousand other follies; but no one was rash enough to grapple with him, accoutred with the pitchfork and the smock-frock as he was, and fight him a fair *stand-up*, in his own clodpole and jolterhead way. The Government had to do this themselves, in *their* way; and at one time his Majesty's Attorney-general chased him out of England. He took up his residence among the freemen and the slaves of the American States; and when the heat of the times had cooled, and his dislike to his transatlantic friends confirmed, he threw himself upon the mercy of

Lord Sidmouth, then Secretary of State for the Home Department, and returned to his native country.

The whole life of Mr. Cobbett is intimately connected with the freedom of the Press. Against him and one or two writers of a similar cast, were most of those laws, that now hang like so many mill-stones round the neck of the Press, aimed. It might be said they were enacted to put him down; to drive him, and such as he, from the theatre of politics; and, by stamp-duties and penalties, be the means of extirpating those insidious and dangerous opinions, to counteract the tendency of which no specific could then be found. If these laws had succeeded in this object, less might be said against them, because little would our countrymen have suffered from the absence of such inflammatory materials: but as they have produced no such effect, and, as we have shewn, can have no tendency to prevent their circulation among the most indigent of the community, their abrogation might be conceded now as a matter of State policy.

In noticing the newspaper establishments of the metropolis, we might have considerably extended our remarks, by bestowing a word or two on those journals with regard to which we have hitherto been silent. But however much entitled many of these are to notice, and even to praise, our limits entirely preclude us from the task. There are several literary weekly publications of recognised merit; such as the *Literary Gazette*, *Somerset-House Gazette*, *Literary Chronicle*, *Mirror*, &c., which are also worthy of observation: but as these are not of a political nature, they scarcely fall within the compass of this enquiry.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON PRINTING, REPORTING, &c.

THE style in which the London papers are printed is highly creditable to the art. The Times, Chronicle, Herald, and Post, considering the expedition with which they must necessarily undergo impression, are specimens of typography not to be seen any where else. The *Times* alone exhibits a superiority and excellence in mechanics that would reflect honour on any country. The small size of the type is wonderful. Except the leading article, which is generally printed with what is called *long-primer*, the whole sheet is made up of nearly the smallest types that are cast; namely, *brevier*, *minion*, and *nonpareil*, and even *pearl*; and these, although

requiring the nicest optical perception, as well in the composing as in the correcting, are nevertheless arranged and impressed so distinctly that but few errors are at any time discovered. The *Times* is among the first curiosities which the foreigner encounters on his arrival in England. All the London newspapers, however, in this department, do not display the same excellence. One morning paper in particular, most of the evening, and not a few of the Sunday ones, (though generally printed on Saturday,) are far inferior to those we have named. Some of them, of extensive circulation, are printed upon the plan in use upwards of forty years ago; not by the power of steam, as are the *Times* and *Chronicle*; nor by cylindrical impression, as are the *John Bull* and others; but by the old-fashioned printing-press, worked by the manual force of two persons only. Some of these exhibit very inferior workmanship; indeed, inferior to many of the provincial journals. The paper material is coarse, the ink bad, the types old, or bearing the marks of decay; and the workman-

ship altogether affording convincing proofs either of indiscriminate haste, or slovenly indifference.

But the execution of the printing is not the only ingenious part of the Metropolitan newspaper system. The work of reporting is admirable. It is matter of regret, that what the laws of this country deny, is connived at by the high court of Legislature, and by almost all the courts of the kingdom; and that what is an offence by statute, and by precedent, is notoriously winked at and permitted, by virtue of some paltry evasion. The manner of reporting the speeches in Parliament illustrates this point exactly. The privileges of the House of Commons forbid all liberties with the speeches therein delivered. Any attempt to publish them—or rather, the act of publishing them—without the consent of the member or members who spoke them, is a trespass punishable by imprisonment, and the concomitant expense of an arrest by the Sergeant-at-Arms. And yet a pitiful subterfuge uniformly sets at defiance the consequences of a Parliamentary trespass. The House recognises no such animal as a reporter. An individual

asking permission to take notes would be turned out of the passage as a confirmed simpleton, or an impertinent intruder. And yet, for all this, not a word is said that is not reported and published, ere a few hours after it is uttered. There is not a table, or desk, or board, to write upon, in the gallery of the House of Commons. There are seats, to be sure: but, as if *too* much accommodation for the public would demonstrate a prodigal expenditure of the public money, our statesmen have taken care that what the one House is indulged with, shall serve for the other; and that if people *will sit* in the Lower House, the alternative is, they *must stand* in the Upper one. Besides the want of a desk or board to write upon, or lean upon, in the gallery aforesaid, there is not even so much day or candle-light in it as is in the one-shilling gallery of Drury-lane Theatre. It is so placed that it appears to have been the intention of the architect who contrived it, to prevent strangers not only from *seeing* what takes place, but actually from *hearing* the debates. Right before you, when perched in this gal-

lery, is the body of the House; the Speaker's chair in the centre of the farther end; and in the fore-ground, the mace, and the table, upon which petition upon petition is often piled in vain. But though the chair is situated as we have described it, and the Speaker in it, the right honourable gentleman is rarely seen by the stranger. A brass chandelier, planted with *tallows* of the largest size, hangs blazing and smoking right in your face. If you are near the centre of the place, that luminary completely deprives you of any opportunity of seeing MANNERS there. If you move nearer the bottom, a tremendous clock-case rises before you like some giant of the Andes; and then the entire of your perspective is the white-washed ceiling. If you sit to the right hand, then you only see the Tories, a few perhaps asleep on the back seats; the effects probably of some oblivious narcotic, or something that operates on their nerves equally powerful,—such as the deep calculations of a philanthropic ale-brewer, or incensed friend of the people. If you budge towards the left, then the most con-

spicuous person in the group is Mr. Joseph Hume, chin-deep in parchment grievances, looking down upon his fellow-labourers in the van, Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Henry Brougham. Go where you will, you see but a part, and hear but a part. The neutral or middle seats of the House are, like the place where Moses stood, sacred ground, which the stranger never beholds. He may hear occasionally some feeble sounds proceed from them; and he may occasionally also hear something about "slavery" and "blood-stained Africa," and "manacles," and the "living slave being chained to his dead brother," and many such appalling epithets; but the face of Mr. Wilberforce, or that of any of his confederates, he is not permitted to gaze upon. If you stretch your neck in the vain endeavour to catch a glimpse of these honourable Members, some person behind you, as anxious as yourself, will immediately let you know that you stand in his way. If you pull out a book or paper to refer to something that is going on, or previously reported, one of the guardians of the place will take means to con-

vince you that reading is not permitted ; and if you whisper to your companion, except when some unlucky or rather unoratorical speaker is under the usual disgrace of being coughed down, you run a considerable chance of being shewn down stairs.

And yet it is in this small, dark, mat-covered, and inconvenient corner, called the Gallery of the British House of Commons, where the caterers of the newspaper Press *steal* the speeches of our modern Ciceros. The mode in which this is accomplished is as follows :—The backmost seat in the gallery is occupied by these persons, about ten or twelve of them in all. The desks they employ are of nature's workmanship—the palms of their hands, or the superior ligaments of their knee-joints. They more frequently use the pencil than pen and ink, although some of them use the latter ; and the usual mode of writing is more common than stenography. During the debate each reporter generally sits his hour ; when he retires to extend his hasty notes for the printer, his place being instantly filled by his successor in waiting. By this pro-

cess, the longest debate in Parliament is often published before the expiration of four hours from the adjournment of the House. While the honourable Members are asleep, dreaming of motions lost and won, the morning politicians of London are reading and discussing their last night's, or perhaps the same morning's, effusions: for the newspapers almost regularly give at six o'clock what was delivered, and cheered, and coughed upon, at four in the morning.

These reports must necessarily be imperfect. The sense is no doubt generally given; but frequently the whole force of the argument and much of the eloquence are lost. This arises partly from the situation of the reporter, from the lowness of the voice, and the peculiar manner of expression of some Members, and from the changing of the tenses. It is a part of the evasion to speak in the third person singular, instead of the first. Consequently, the force and the antithesis, and the originality of the speech, are lost. From these cramping circumstances an apparent sameness of expression pervades the whole. For the same reason that a brilliant

oration is spoiled, a dull one is improved. But this is not all:—as the rights of the reporter are arbitrary, his prepossessions are the stronger. He, like the pit critic of a theatre, has his friends and his favourites. He even affects to be unable to *bear* one speaker—of being unable to *comprehend* another—and of being (heaven help him !) so *sickened* as to be unable to listen to a third. These unfortunate objects of dislike to so mighty a personage as a reporter, never shine in above a dozen or twenty lines on the greatest occasion. On the other hand, the partiality is as strong in favour of other honourable Members ; so much so, that on the morrow, the favourite speaker is quite overwhelmed with obligation at finding himself dressed out in words, and tropes, and ingenious arguments, which he never used, nor could have used. Time after time he is polished whether he will or no ; and to the reading public, at a hundred miles from the capital, he is ranked a meteor, who, perhaps only twinkles a dull star of the lowest magnitude.

It is alleged that the risk which the reporter incurs, of being called to account at the

bar of the House for misrepresentation, is sufficient to prevent him from wilfully giving offence, or indulging in mis-statements ; and that thus the illegality of printing the speeches tends to make the system of reporting more accurate and complete. An imaginary breach of privilege is supposed to operate as efficiently as if the privilege itself were abandoned, and each reporter sworn to copy the language uttered as nearly verbatim as possible. This is one of those fictions that pass current in the present age. Its orthodoxy is never once doubted. It is conceived to be so sound, that the idea of critically investigating its merits never once crosses the mind.

That this opinion is founded in error, we think, will not be difficult to prove. The persons who report are as subject to party feelings and party prejudices, as any other class of men. They are often living indexes of the sentiments of their respective papers ; and it is to be feared they too frequently incline to give to the eloquence of a Ministerial or Opposition speech, in proportion as their opinions lean, all the sur-

reptitious advantage of their own pens. Look at the reports themselves, and this defect is obvious. How many different versions of some particular sentiment or expression do we see given; and we seldom fail to perceive that they are conveyed in more or less forcible terms, just as the party feelings of the various editors or their reporters dictate. It is not surprising that such feelings should betimes operate, when it is considered that the reporter is under less restraint (except in the case of glaring personal offence) by the evasive mode of taking the Member's sentiments, and especially so when he is not bound by any special obligation to be more accurate than his own judgment directs him. He stands in awe of the Member, and that is all. He incurs no hazard from the House, but through, perhaps, one individual of it. He may be sent to Newgate till the end of the Session; or, in a flagrant case, he may be prosecuted by the Attorney-general. But imprisonment in Newgate does not prevent him from *resuming his seat* at the next meeting of Parliament; and the *ex-officio* of the Attorney-general cannot deprive him of

any of his *privileges*. When the terms of his sentence are fulfilled, he returns to his *vocation*.

There are two ways, by either of which the business of reporting might be materially improved. The first is by appropriating a more eligible situation to the reporters, wherein they could, with greater ease, hear whatever passes in the House. Let these persons be separated sufficiently from the Members ; let them be concealed, if thought proper, from the view of strangers in the gallery ; but place them so that they may as distinctly collect the language and meaning of every Member, as does the Speaker in the chair. Let this bench be free to every person who appears in the character of a reporter, and is certified to be so by any individual Member of the House. By this method the speeches might still continue to be reported in the third person as at present, improved in accuracy and exhibiting more uniformity,—the best evidence of it.

The second way to be proposed would still be a preferable one ; and although it would introduce an innovation quite novel to the pri-

privileges of Parliament, it nevertheless is calculated to render the reports not only more accurate, but would afford some tangible security to every Member against misrepresentation:—it is, after giving to the reporters the advantage of a convenient desk, within the hearing of all parts of the House, to restrict their number to such as would give security to a specified amount, and take an oath that, to the best of their judgment, they would publish a faithful transcript of the proceedings that take place, and the words that are uttered, in that House. Under these circumstances, the speeches might be given verbatim; and in the event of a complaint being made by a Member of misrepresentation, let the vote of the House decide the extent of the trespass; and what amount, or whether the whole of the penalty, should not be exacted from the offending party or his sureties. Let it also be in the power of the House, should it see proper, to exclude the offender from the privileges of a reporter, in all time coming, or for any such modified period as they might award. So soon

as rules of this sort are enacted, the gallery ought to be entirely set apart for strangers.

But it must at the same time be frankly admitted, that before any of these improvements can be carried into effect, the two Houses of Parliament must first undergo considerable alteration. The comfort and convenience of the Members themselves must first be attended to. It may truly be said, that if Members of Parliament, the legitimate representatives of the nation, are not allowed the means of writing and reporting to greater advantage than the hired gentlemen of the Press, who grope their way in the gallery, it is in vain to ask the extension of such advantages to the latter alone. Neither in the House of Peers, nor in that of the Commons, have Noble Lords or Honourable Members the use of pens and ink. They may obtain them, to be sure, but they have no table or board to exercise them on. How stigmatising is it to the taste of so great a nation as this, to see his Majesty's Prime Minister, and the first lords and statesmen in the realm, taking notes on the

top of their hats, or on their knees, like some itinerant tax-gatherers, or petty surveyors of window-lights! And yet nothing is more common! There is no other way of collecting the statements of an opponent; for the British Senate is as little furnished with the materials of penmanship as the most obscure theatre in the kingdom. When we see these assemblies of all that is noble and illustrious, whether by birth or by talents, sitting in courts in some degree corresponding to their own dignity and the dignity of the empire—when we see the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland arrayed, as they ought to be, in a hall of such dimensions as is suitable to their comfort and accommodation—and when we see the gallery, where their constituents can alone witness their conduct, of more extensive admeasurement than a retail linen-draper's shop—in short, when we see the members with a peg to hang their hats on—and a more convenient way of coming to a division than the present, by which they are thrust into the lobby, as if they were the excommunicated Jews that frequent the environs of the Stock

Exchange—we shall then expect to see some approach made towards the execution of those improvements we have taken the liberty to suggest.

The improvements suggested for the House of Commons might also be extended to the principal Courts of law and justice throughout the kingdom, under certain restrictions in the power of the judges or magistrates. This innovation would have a beneficial effect in two ways:—first, it would give the public a more authentic report of judicial proceedings, which are at all times deeply interesting; and in the second place, it would, in a great measure, put a stop to those bombastical and fictitious police reports, which, to say the least of them, are discreditable to the Press, but which the good-natured and gullable part of the community are pleased to laugh at, as wonderfully characteristic and amusing. It is, no doubt, from the encouragement these Bow and Marlborough Street proceedings receive from the public, that the witty authors of them continue their fabrication. Wit is good enough in season, but not that sort of it. A foolish or ludicrous person

may lawfully be smiled at ; but it is rather overstepping the boundaries of discretion, to set invention actively at work to make him appear *more* ludicrous, no matter how humble may be his situation. And then the slang that is introduced is intolerable. A smattering of it is pardonable ; and so long as prize-fights are permitted and encouraged, we shall always be glad to hear Brutality speak its own language : but why fill every page of a public journal with it ; and seize upon the blunders and sometimes the misfortunes of poor wretches in a watch-house, to trump up a story, the chief merit of which is supposed to consist in the happy touches of vulgar slang which the out-runner of the paper-office can invent ? Surely his talents are not so enviable. There is much need of a reform in this department.

The theatrical criticisms have much of the same fault. They are tainted too much with the language of the green-room,—with the language of adulation. It is obvious from the style of the whole of these criticisms that the authors of them draw from the same picture,—

that they meet in something like a club, and discuss in measured words the merits of the performers they think it right to praise or blame. One would think that one person writes the whole, so strikingly alike are they.* Nay, as to that matter, the criticism of one season might serve for another ; for except a few introductory observations as to the manner in which the performers are *cast*, (a slang word in daily use,—see all the journals,) the remarks upon their exertions, and the more attractive incidents of the piece, are the same from year to year.

A critic should not be a pensioner on the Government he finds fault with ; and a person whose duty it is to lead and correct the public

* A morning paper some time ago pronounced a high eulogium, in its usual style of dramatical criticism, upon a piece which was represented as performed at one of the Theatres Royal the night previous ; but it turned out on the morning, to the no small chagrin of the critic, that *no such play had been acted!!* This proves that frequently these criticisms, alleged to be written by a person who was present, are printed before the subject of them has been performed.

taste in theatrical performances, should not owe his admission to the generosity—or liberality, if you will—of the stage-manager. He must repay the obligation in some way; and being personally known to that person, and others in his interest, he is extremely liable to be influenced to the detriment of impartial animadversion, should that be called for. Besides, is it to be expected that a reporter should be a critic? It is not enough that he tells what he sees and hears; but he should be sent there, an independent and unknown agent of the newspaper establishment, to make his remarks upon the performances, without being exposed to the censure or the propitiation of any manager whatever. If the theatrical criticisms that appear came from sources such as these, they would not only be more interesting to the public, but they would reflect merit on the journal that published them. They would at the same time be the means of correcting that false taste, that pantomimical display, which of late years has become so attractive to the presiding deities of the galleries.

CHAPTER IX.

THE condition of the English provincial Press falls next under our notice.

It is a remarkable fact, that out of the Metropolis there are only three newspapers in England published oftener than once a week. These are the Nottingham Journal, which is published twice a week; and the Kentish Gazette and Kentish Chronicle, also twice a week. All the rest, to the number of about one hundred and thirty-five, or thereby, are weekly ones. One remark applies to the whole of these journals, and which applies equally to Scotland as to England; namely, that in politics they are entirely regulated by the circumstances of the district in which they chiefly circulate. If the paper is supported chiefly by the proprietors and yeomen of an agricultural county, that paper is

generally loyal in its sentiments ; if it circulates in a manufacturing province, it is very generally the reverse. This remark will not apply indiscriminately, because even in these seats of disaffection there are to be found Tory papers of the highest respectability ; but it is questionable if the circulation of these be so extensive, or the number of them so formidable.

It is a happy thing for this country that unlimited discussion is permitted to all, on all political subjects ; for however unwarrantable may be the observations which are occasionally emitted, and however unpardonable may be the strictures which are passed upon the conduct of individuals, still we hold that these offences, or discrepancies, are as little derogatory to the character of the newspaper Press in general, as the excesses of a madman or a fanatic are a stigma upon the sanity or sound sense of mankind. Throughout England, as in its capital, are to be found men connected with the Press who may be said to be the zealots of their party, and whose prepossessions on political questions are wild in the extreme. These

are a *coute qui coute* sort of people, that speak and write what they think and feel at all hazards. Perhaps to be able to convince them of their folly or error is impossible. But are they to be hunted down? Because reason makes no impression upon them, and because “even though vanquished they can argue still,”—is there no other mode of making their fury harmless, their ravings impotent and innocuous, but by State or party prosecutions? It is surely not necessary, for the purpose of driving infection from their productions, to exalt them into notice as martyrs to their respective doctrines. We say, Let them alone and they will die: leave them unnoticed, and their own spleen will consume them. If their opponents of the Press cannot deprive their writings of their sting and their poison, it is fruitless to think that Newgate, or even the pillory, (both of which perhaps they secretly aspire to,) will have that effect.

But, upon the whole, the provincial Press of England is respectable. The printing is not only above mediocrity, but in many instances it is equal to the first-rate, and is seldom inferior

to the second-rate, London prints. There are exceptions, doubtless ; but these arise more from the want of public encouragement, than from the want of taste or ability on the part of the printers. In Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, York, and Carlisle, there are papers written in a spirited and talented manner, displaying as much research and political tact as the best of the London ones ; and which, in point of literary merit, stand infinitely above the majority of their provincial contemporaries. We might particularise ; in which case we should have some difficulty in doing justice to the merits of many journals on opposite sides ; and were we to attempt to censure, we should be placed in a similar dilemma. Either of these courses, after what we have said upon the London Press, would perhaps be invidious ; especially as it is sufficient for our purpose to inquire into the effects which these publications have produced, or are likely to produce, where they severally circulate.

It is well known that the great proportion of mechanics and labourers in England are, to a

fearful extent, disaffected towards the Government. So long as manufactures are in a flourishing condition, and these people are paid a fair wage for their labour, the opinions they cherish are confined to their own bosoms, and live as it were in a state of inertness. But whenever a season of embarrassment comes, the consequence of over-production or a sudden inhibition of the foreign market, and the price of labour is reduced, then their murmurings break out into open hostility against the State. They are unreserved in their denunciations. They loudly threaten, not only the institutions of the country, but the property of individuals; and they not only seriously retard the return of prosperity, but they frighten away from the district every thing like peace and security. It is notorious that these feelings, among the lower classes, are engendered by the newspaper Press. They imbibe, from the public journals, those anti-British sentiments that they have so often attempted to carry into practice. The London ones pave the way, and the provincial papers follow;—what is said in the

metropolis is confirmed in the country. Thus, step by step, are our artisans, naturally inquisitive, led into a train of thinking agreeable perhaps to their wishes, but most injurious to their humble circumstances and peace of mind. A mechanic who aspires to be a politician imposes a tax upon his industry, which his family generally feels severely ; for, in his laudable desire to amend the laws for the imaginary benefit of the people, he generally forgets that he has a home more worthy of his consideration.

The Government subdues these periodical discontents by force ; for they have no other way of allaying them. Various laws have, within these few years, been enacted to regulate public meetings, and prevent assemblages of people in the open fields. These laws are salutary and commendable ; for the idea of a multitude of persons meeting to con over their real or ideal grievances, and dunning such a Government as this into certain measures, which they (the field-orators and their partisans) conceive to be expedient, is too absurd and insulting to be borne. The disorder therefore, when it

appears, must be instantly met with a powerful remedy. In times of excitation there is little opportunity of correcting the principles of the people, by any exertions on the part of the loyal and constitutional Press : but during peace something of this kind might be done to advantage. When prosperity has soothed those passions which penury and political fanatics had done much to incense, some effort ought to be made, to convince the artisan of his former errors and misconduct—of the treachery of the leaders of his faction—of the false and visionary predictions to which he trusted, and by which he was misled ; and, above all, of the inevitable and irretrievable ruin which would have befallen himself, his family, and his country, had the mad measures he contemplated, and aided to accomplish, been carried into effect. The meanest labourer in this country can think betimes impartially ; and he can do this with judgment and discrimination, when the storms of political contention or manufacturing distress have subsided. He should then be plied with reason ; and the means by which he had

been roused to inconsiderate alarm should be fairly unveiled and exposed. It may not be possible to eradicate the taint completely, but the virulence of the malady may be diminished. He may remain anti-British in his sentiments still; the traces of old Cobbett and his ally Paine may be still observable; and a hankering after annual Parliaments and vote by ballot may at times be still overheard: but, for all this, he might be reasoned out of the more fatal and pernicious consequences of his distemper. Such an undertaking would be worthy of the Constitutional Association, or even the Bible Society. The money which the former has spent upon law, to no good purpose, might have been beneficially expended in providing the mechanics of the kingdom with the views of opposite writers, on every important subject, at a cheap rate. In short, it would be most expedient in the Government, and particularly at a period of peace like the present, to afford the working classes the most unrestricted opportunity of gathering information. In Manchester, Bir-

mingham, and the other populous towns of the interior, much good might be effected by bringing to the remembrance of these persons the follies of a few past years, and the ludicrous and almost insane attempts which they made to overturn the laws and institutions of England, by the aid of cudgels and blankets, borne by a few hungry, ragged, undisciplined, and ignorant mechanics ! Nothing makes a man more sick of himself, or less confident of his powers or talents, than a mock rehearsal of his former vices or absurdities. He recoils from the contemplation of them ; and the wakeful fear, derived from experience, of being lashed, and ridiculed, and laughed at a second time, induces him to be more cautious and consistent for the remainder of his life. It is for this reason, among others, that we would earnestly recommend to the Government a reduction of the duties on newspapers. We have measured well the new field that would thereby be opened up to industry, and the salutary opportunity that would be afforded to the humblest individual of seeing those emanations

of public opinion, which, whether they accord with his own predilections or not, he has a strong propensity to peruse.

It is, however, honourable to the English provincial Press, and worthy of notice here, that rarely has it happened that the resentments of party have carried the several writers to the same extremes of violence, as they have too often done in the metropolis, as well as in Scotland and Ireland. Actions for libel are by no means frequent; and although occasionally we discover in the larger cities editorial squabbles given vent to,—no doubt for the edification of the public, —still these are but harmless, and more amusing sometimes from the vanity of the combatants, than productive of serious consequences. Seldom, indeed, does it happen that the conductors of public journals feel sore from the personal attacks which are directed against them, or have recourse to any other mode of settling the matters in dispute than to the fulminations of the pen. This little tyrant, though sometimes offensive enough, is nevertheless a very harmless tyrant. He inflicts more imaginary than real wounds,

and is a much safer umpire than one that is unfortunately too often, and very unnecessarily, had recourse to.

The business of reporting in the country is not, by many degrees, at the same stage of perfection as it is in London. There is not only the cost of it to obstruct its speedy improvement, but there is a want of rivalry, the very soul of improvement, and there is besides the foolish prejudices of the local magistracy. There are not a few of these official gentlemen who entertain a sort of official antipathy for a reporter. The sight of one from the bench alarms them prodigiously. They almost think their sacred prerogative infringed upon, when any of their proceedings, *unknown to them*, appear formally and *literally* before the public. This is not the case every where, we confess; for there are many liberal and intelligent magistrates in every county in England; but it is unfortunately true,—and the charge extends to several populous towns,—that there are magistrates who throw many obstacles in the way of accurate publicity being given to cases that come before them.

This, to be sure, is the fault of the provincial Press itself; or rather, it is its misfortune. The little profit that accrues from the capital sunk, in most of these country establishments, entirely prevents the proprietors from attending so studiously to this department as otherwise they might do. If the consumption of their papers were increased, by the abrogation of part of the burdens that press upon them, they would then be able to turn their views to various required improvements. In many of the cities and towns there are public and judicial proceedings, which, if carefully reported, would be found to be of considerable interest to the public. But little notice is taken of them. When any important trial occurs, an effort is made, no doubt; but so little reliance is placed on these occasional efforts by the London Press, that special reporters are sent down from town for the purpose.

CHAPTER X.

FROM the English Press we naturally turn to the consideration of that beyond the Tweed. It is only within these few years that the utility of the newspaper Press was rightly appreciated in Scotland. The inequality of the political rights of the same classes of people in England and Scotland contributed to this. Popular elections are not known in the latter country. There is there no such thing as a forty-shilling freehold. The yeoman and householder of England have a voice in the choice of their representatives, equal to what is possessed by but a few of the oldest and richest families in Scotland. The Scottish yeoman, the opulent householder, the extensive farmer, the independent merchant and land-owner, have neither vote nor influence in

the election of a Scottish Member to the House of Commons. Nay, what is more wonderful still,—a man may possess real and heritable property, in houses or land, to the amount of thirty thousand pounds per annum, and yet be not entitled to the political franchise enjoyed by almost every labourer in England, and even by the starved, betattered, and unlettered turfcutters of the province of Munster in Ireland !

This wide difference in the political privileges of the two kingdoms was, for a length of time, the principal cause of the apathy that existed on the part of the Scottish people towards political publications. The want of education could not be the cause ; for the people in the humblest circumstances of life were then, as they are now, much superior in that respect to their English neighbours. About forty years ago there were only *eight* papers published in Scotland;* not the one half of what were published in London

* “The Edinburgh Gazette” is the oldest Scottish newspaper, and was commenced in February 1699. “The Edinburgh Courant” was established in 1705 ; and “The Caledonian Mercury” in 1720.

alone, and not the eighth part of the number printed in England. Immediately subsequent to the end of the American war, in which the people of Scotland took a deep interest, their number began to increase; and at the breaking out of the French Revolution the list had swelled to about twenty-five. This event gave the first decided tone to the opinions of the labouring classes in that kingdom; for we soon after see them entering into combinations, holding public meetings, organizing political societies—the “British Convention,” for instance—all for the purpose of fanning the infant flame of republican liberty, which that revolution had lighted up. The number of newspapers was at that time twenty-seven;—four of which were published thrice a-week, six twice a-week, and the rest weekly. The number published at present is, it appears, thirty-two; of which five are thrice a-week, eight twice a-week, and the remainder weekly.* These journals are all, comparatively speaking, respectably conducted. None of them, however,

* There is no daily newspaper published in Scotland.

have a very extensive circulation; for however intelligent and inquisitive the population of Scotland may be, they do not give such encouragement to the Press as the inhabitants of England. The English provincial papers are in general much better circulated—or, what is the same to the publishers, their sale is almost universally more extensive,—than that of the leading journals of Scotland. But in the mechanical department they are equal to the best of the English; and many of them are conducted with a degree of spirit and talent creditable to the country. There are exceptions to this, we confess, both as regards literature and the arts. A few are hurriedly printed on despicable paper, scarcely fit for packages, and exhibit any thing but good taste in the arrangement or selection; and, what is more discreditable still, the wretched thing called the article, which is further miscalled *original*, is nothing else but the trumped-up lucubrations of some London reporter, or political attorney of the neighbourhood, for which a half or a whole guinea perhaps is paid, according to the resources of the

establishment. Indeed, it is notorious that more than one or two of the Scottish newspapers were, and we believe still are, supplied with the summary of the week's news, in this manner; of which fact the generality of their readers are so far unacquainted, as to attribute it to the learning and genius of the cunning but illiterate printer and publisher. The London provider to these publications is, no doubt, well content to transfer the fame of the essay for the value received; especially as he himself, perhaps, is in the habit of pilfering nine-tenths of it from the morning papers. We have reason to know that not a few of the English provincial journals are likewise supplied with their principal articles in this manner. Discreditable as it is to the several proprietors of these papers, and even to the town where they are published, yet the surreptitious commodity is securely smuggled under the imperturbable cognomen of the literati—"WE." "How *we* apples swim!"

The spirit of party has run exceedingly high in Scotland of late years; the causes of which, and the results to which it has led, are so inti-

mately linked with the liberty of the Press and the rights of parties, as to demand more than a cursory examination.

When any particular party or denomination of men have once obtained the ascendancy in any corporate body, or in the administration of public affairs, few people are to be found illiberal or unreasonable enough to affirm that they ought not to strive by every fair and honourable means to maintain that ascendancy. Nothing can be fairer. It is a fact, however, that while the Pitt or Tory party are in point of wealth and responsibility the strongest in Scotland, they have, since the days of Mr. Fox, been inferior to their opponents in many respects,—in point of party tact and political manœuvring—in point of oratorical display—and in point of legal talent and influence at the Scottish bar. A love of novelty is the besetting sin of the great mass of society; so that he is sure to be considered an oracle with the multitude, who can depict the most desirable innovation in the most agreeable colours, either in the front of a hustings or in the pages of a magazine. Such a man is dangerous

in exact proportion to his ambition—to the warmth of his friendships, or the asperity of his enmities. Thus, while the lower grade of the citizens of London are tinctured by the tenets of such men as the representatives of Westminster, and Cobbett, Hunt, Wooler, and their contemporaries, the major part of the population of the manufacturing districts of Scotland are tainted with the opinions of Messrs. Jeffrey, Horner, Smyth, Mackintosh, Brougham, and the other contributors of the Edinburgh Review. We do not say that the mechanics have sipped their sentiments at the fountain-head, because every one knows that the price of the Review is above their circumstances; but they have received them at second-hand, through the innumerable retail modes of conveying popular opinions. Not only the commoner classes of Scotland, but many of those who form its aristocracy, as well as not a few of the nobility and squiralty of England, have pinned their faith to its prophetic pages, and have not blushed to be considered its partisans and apologists. Indeed, when all things are taken into considera-

tion, it is hard to say whether the wild acts of the revolutionists of France, or the wilder dreams of the writers in this Northern luminary, have had the greatest tendency to inflame the prejudices of the people, and engender principles dangerous to the stability of the British Empire.

But let this pass. One thing is incontrovertible,—that at an early period of the last war, the *Edinburgh Review*, then almost the only periodical work of talent in Europe, was unrelenting in the severity with which it attacked every measure of Mr. Pitt and his associates; while, to render its gall more bitter, and to make its partiality more glaring, it extolled every successful or abortive law introduced by his opponent. It confined not its reprehensions to measures: every man in power, every supporter of the Minister, every servant of the State, as well as every luckless pensioner upon the public purse—provided none of these were Whigs,—were considered legitimate subjects for mirth or animadversion. They were all considered fair subjects for the lash, and it was in-

flicted without mercy or remorse. We speak here nothing but facts. Any man who will be at the pains to turn over the pages of that work from 1806 to 1818, will find that no one who contributed to the overthrow of Buonaparte, either by his influence in the Cabinet or his vote in the Senate,—or who had the boldness, either as a magistrate or private citizen, to express his approbation of those measures which led to his downfall,—but is selected as a butt for censure or ridicule, expressed either directly or by innuendo. Success rendered its writers callous to consequences. Their antagonists shrunk back from them. Unopposed, they imagined themselves invincible. They saw that they held the reins of criticism despotically, and their pasquinades increased in number as well as in bitterness. The Tory sufferers winced under their applications in dogged silence. They endured the torture, and only thanked God it was not worse. Frequently, indeed, they offered to *conciliate*; but they never had the prowess to retaliate. A dinner and a brief often averted what their pens should have paid. They slunk into holes and

corners, while the artillery of the Edinburgh Whig trained-bands poured their grapeshot on the devoted heads of whomsoever they pleased.

Habit is second nature ; and so insolent did the whole Opposition Press of Scotland become, from the example set it by the Review, that the idea of a Ministerial publication adventuring upon the same course of criticism, or assuming the same liberties with personal character, was never once dreamed of. What ! talk about *us*—name *our* names—laugh at *our* follies—sneer at *our* infirmities !—Good God ! who ever heard of such presumption !

In this way it may be said, that the Whigs not only ruled the Press in the North, but that they considered themselves entitled to the sole direction of public opinion. Rivalship was out of the question in their liberal judgments ; and while the reputation of every official man was at their mercy, they carefully excluded from their minds the reflection, that “even-handed justice” would some day return on their heads those individual lacerations they had so freely inflicted upon others.

We do not quarrel with what is called *per-*

sonality so much as some people do. There is at present a superabundance of cant in the world upon this subject. We conceive that the private reputation and past conduct of every statesman, whether in the Ministerial or Opposition ranks, are less or more identified with every new measure he supports. The amount of confidence, which it may be expedient to repose in a public man, can best be estimated by his former integrity and consistency; while the sincerity and patriotism of the legislator can only be assayed, by seeing him enforcing his own innovations among his own retainers, and by the single-heartedness and uprightness of his whole conduct. But there is a mighty distinction between determining a man's integrity by his past and present actions, and that of dragging his secret sinnings—the petty faults and offences of his domestic life—into the scale with his senatorial or official conduct. Had this distinction been attended to, perhaps the scenes that occurred in Scotland, and the fatal results to which they led, would have been averted. But it seemed to be lost sight of; and the newspaper

Press, mimicking the style of the *Edinburgh Review*—copying all its ribaldry without any of its refinement—dealt out the most unwarrantable aspersions upon all, from the First Lord of the Treasury downwards. Criminatory and personal remarks were closely monopolised, and the Whigs appeared to hold letters patent for lauding or reprobating whoever dared to think himself their political opponent. He was a rash man who avowed himself one.

Under these circumstances Blackwood's Magazine commenced upon Ministerial politics; and the freedoms it took with, and the castigations it inflicted upon, the leading Whigs,—and indeed upon the whole of the Whig aristocracy of the North,—were so astounding, so unexpected, and withal so galling, that for the first time the alarm-bell was rung of Tory scurrility and slander, and chiefly by those persons who had themselves wielded with absolute sway the same weapons. The *Scotsman*, a weekly paper, written with some ability, was at this time, the champion of the Whigs, under whose patronage it gave a wider circulation to the sentiments of

the Review—indulged, with absolute licentiousness in its own personalities; and while it defamed and decried the Magazine, seemed to set actions for damages at defiance itself. The recriminatory and fearless charges which the new magazine fulminated, attracted the notice of Mr. John Scott, editor of one of the London magazines, who employed his pen to check the impetuosity of his contemporary, and defend himself and his party from its attacks. Retaliation ensued, invidious imputations passed on both sides, to such a degree of violence, as led to a personal quarrel, and subsequently to a meeting, in which Mr. Scott lost his life.

About this time a new Paper was established in opposition to the *Scotsman*, called the *Beacon*. This journal was evidently got up in their own cause, and in some measure in their own defence, by the leading Tories of Edinburgh. It was patronized by Sir Walter Scott, the Lord Advocate, and various others, who became bound to assist the publishers of it with a specified sum of money, in the event of its proving a losing concern. The writer or wri-

ters of this paper were as little fastidious in their expressions of disapprobation of the conduct and characters of the leading Whigs, as their journal had been, and continued to be, with respect to the Tories. Both sides erred—both went to an unwarrantable length in their strictures upon party and individual conduct. Old rumours were re-circulated—injurious surmises, long considered dead and forgotten, were anew let loose upon the current of scandal—wounds that once bled, but which were dried up, were cruelly probed till they bled afresh ;—in short, it might be said that about the time of Mr. Scott's death the newspapers of Scotland were filled with nothing else but personal quarrels, invidious recriminations, private scandal, and angry altercations between families and individuals. It is but justice to say that both parties erred ; for the journals on both sides, that stirred up these violent discussions, have in the same Court been subjected to heavy damages for libels upon private individuals.

During the heat of these animosities, the Lord Advocate, Sir William Rae, withdrew his name

from the paper he had aided to establish ; and having unwarily delivered up to a gentleman of the name of Stuart, who had supposed himself injured in its pages, a copy of the obligation by which he and his confederates had become bound in a certain sum of money for the uses of the Beacon, that journal was soon after extinguished.

But the unpleasant altercations of the Scottish Press did not end here. Although the *Beacon* was burnt out, the contention was not over ; nor had the time yet arrived when the original arbiters of public discussion were to regain their former ascendancy. About the time the Beacon went down, a paper called the *Sentinel*, upon similar principles, was established in Glasgow. It was immediately concluded by the old opponents of Blackwood and the Beacon, that this new paper emanated from the same persons ; and having a similar object in view, was to be supported in the same manner. This, we believe, was not the case ; and its publication about the time the Beacon fell, arose entirely from accidental circumstances. It was difficult, how-

ever, to convince the exasperated leaders of the opposite party of this. It was watched as closely as it watched its enemies; and what tends to shew the vindictive spirit that then existed, is, that Mr. Stuart of Dunearn, the gentleman before alluded to, on his examination as a witness in an alleged case of theft, declared, that *he* and a noble family in Scotland had appointed agents in various places of Scotland, to endeavour to discover who were the contributors to and supporters of the *Sentinel*.* In prosecution of this scheme, Mr. Stuart, it would appear, took advantage of some differences that existed between the co-partners in this newspaper, and assisted one of them (who, by the by, it appears had only some feasible pretence of being a partner) in the abstracting of certain manuscripts and other private papers belonging to the other. This act of carrying off the papers, a part of which were afterwards admitted to have been in the possession of Mr. Stuart,—this act, dishonourable and deeply disgraceful as it was to all concerned

* See Papers printed by order of the House of Commons.

in it,—led to the duel between Mr. Stuart and Sir Alexander Boswell, which, as in the case of Mr. Scott, proved fatal—Sir Alexander Boswell being killed.

It may well be conceived that these scandalous and lamentable proceedings were little calculated to soothe party feelings, previously roused to the highest degree of exasperation. The result, while it affords a lesson to the conductors of newspapers, does at the same time shew to what an extent popular excitation can be carried, and what effect a junto of Scotch lawyers can produce, not only on the public mind, but upon the law and the judgment-seat itself. The person who, in this case, it was alleged had been the actual pilferer of the papers, was indicted for theft at the instance of the Crown: the trial was put off, and subsequently was abandoned by the Lord Advocate. The prosecution, however, was taken up by the suffering party; but such was the clamour that was raised, such was the influence of the Whig lawyers at the Edinburgh bar, and such was their determination to bring off the accused by

some means or other,—knowing, as they did, that the character of Mr. Stuart, one of the leaders of their party, was deeply involved in the result,—that the prosecutor was finally advised to abandon his proceedings.

These matters were afterwards, on two different occasions, brought before Parliament, in the shape of a censure upon the Lord Advocate for the part he had taken in the newspaper Press, as well as for his conduct in the above prosecution; but the motion was very wisely negatived.

These proceedings, though they by no means healed the sores of the two parties, at least put an end to the expression of high Tory sentiments in Scotland.* Blackwood's Magazine is now the only spirited production on the Ministerial side. It is a host in itself; but still it cannot be ex-

* The Tory party were fairly overpowered and beaten. They did not even make a stand in their own defence; each deserted the other; and those whose duty it was (if party consistency is of any value) to have rallied round the objects of Whig vengeance, hid themselves from all participation in the fate or conduct of those,

pected to have the same influence, or extent of circulation, as the Edinburgh Review and Constable's Magazine, aided and assisted by an ultra-Whig journal in almost every town of any considerable population in Scotland. The Opposition Press has therefore regained that ascendancy which it had ten years ago, and of which it availed itself on various occasions to further the designs of faction. Its increased powers will, no doubt, be devoted to the same purposes on some future occasion.

But it must not be supposed that because there are few journals in Scotland, that actively espouse and defend the measures of Ministers, there are but a few likewise that maintain a character of steady loyalty to his Majesty's Government. On the contrary, there are many of this latter description. These, however, manifest little concern either at the insults or misrepre-

who, in many respects, were duped by their promises. The disgrace was complete; and it will be a long time before a Tory newspaper obtain a fair influence over public opinion in Scotland, from the dastardly conduct of the leaders of the party on this occasion.

sentations of their opponents. They plod on wearily in the same cause—extracting loyal sentiments where they find them, but forming none. Their moderation arises from interest. Their advertisements are the only crop they think worth the cultivation, for this sound reason,—they are the only commodity that remunerates them. They sacrifice every thing to this, and can therefore scarcely be called *political* journals, except from their being vehicles for the opinions of the London papers. From this reproach, however, we must exempt the *Edinburgh Journal* and *Glasgow Courier*; the latter of which may truly be said to be the only decidedly Ministerial publication in the West of Scotland, where there is a population of between three and four hundred thousand persons, mostly artisans, and on that account deeply inoculated with the principles of 1793 and 1820. There are other journals that represent themselves on the same side, but for what reason it would be hard to ascertain from their pages. Indeed, if prudence be taken into the question, they calculate wisely; for so attached

are the lower orders to sentiments of an opposite kind, that no paper, advocating the measures of the Ministry, with the same firmness that others display in reprobating them, could possibly succeed under the present weight of taxation. The inhabitants of Scotland are desirous enough to hear both parties, and to mould their principles accordingly ; but they are too poor to purchase the necessary publications. *Audi alteram partem* is a maxim which their poverty, and not their will, prevents them from obeying.

It is true that the levelling principles of the artisans of Scotland lie dormant at present; that the season of combination and alarm is over; and that the scene of rebellion and idleness is now converted into one of peaceful and cheerful industry, where the noise of the anvil and the loom is the only response to the song of contentment; and that therefore the influence of the Press, and tendency of its opinions, are of minor importance. The premises are correct, but the inference is erroneous. There is nothing frightful in external appearances, it is true ; but they

are little better than simpletons who imagine that the distemper is rooted out. Those democratic principles, which are always congenial to the feelings of the labourer, and which the adherents of Mr. Fox cherished and disseminated in this country for other objects than the deluded people contemplated, are more universally spread and recognised than they were at the era of the British Convention. At that time they were only in a state of embryo—only beginning to be understood and reflected on by our mechanics; now they are confirmed by the force of education. The Press has done this—the radical and disaffected Press has done this; for *it* alone has been able, by pampering every vulgar prejudice, to obtain a hearing from the mass of the people. These opinions have now the preponderance; and it is for the impartial observer to say, whether Ministers have not taken particular care, by their system of duties, to perpetuate that preponderance?

When these facts are considered fairly, who will be bold enough to affirm that the insurrectionary spirit of 1793, of 1812, and 1820, is ex-

tirpated ; or that the state of the manufacturing districts is such as to preclude the necessity of alarm on the part of the well-disposed, or extraordinary vigilance on the part of the Government? That spirit is far from being extirpated, God knows. The proselytising labours of the disaffected are going on without fear or interruption. Let a period of mercantile and manufacturing exigence recur—let the deposits of the Savings' Banks and the superfluities and incidental resources of better times become exhausted—let the weekly earnings of the weaver and his family become barely adequate to their accustomed sustenance,—and the same dramas of clamorous threatenings and rebellious movements will be repeated. The artisans of the kingdom have an egregious misconception of their own strength and intelligence; and it is the bounden duty of the Government, in the time of domestic tranquillity, to convince them of it. We have pointed out the method.

The Scottish newspapers are as little familiar with correct or systematic reporting as their English contemporaries out of London. It is with the

greatest difficulty that the proceedings of public meetings can be obtained with accuracy: The cause of this is the same in Scotland as in England, the poverty of the establishments—the want of practice in those who attempt it occasionally—and the want of ability in those who are employed for the purpose. There is not consumption enough in the kingdom to enable newspaper proprietors to pay one or more young men of good education in that character, as in London.

In Edinburgh, it is true, there are two or three persons who profess stenography, and are willing enough to accept a fee on any important trial; but we believe there is not one of that profession regularly attached to any establishment. The evidence on justiciary trials is well enough transcribed, because that can be done easily by any one who can write; but law pleadings and speeches at public meetings are very indifferently, if not wretchedly reported. In Glasgow, notwithstanding the daily occurrence there of cases of importance to the public—where even the police proceedings are betimes

highly amusing,—there is not a reporter of any ability. There is not a professed short-hand writer in the city, far less connected with the journals; and the reports of speeches and other public proceedings that appear, are either given by the authors, or are written from the recollections of bystanders or parties interested.

CHAPTER XI.

So much has already been said upon the Press of Ireland, that little more can be added under this head. There are fifty-six newspapers published in the island, of which four *small ones* are daily, (published in Dublin,) thirteen thrice a-week, twenty-four twice a-week, and the residue once a-week. This number includes the Dublin papers, of which there are sixteen in all. It will be observed by referring to the table in page 92, that in the year 1782, there were only three newspapers published in the whole of Ireland; a pitiful proof of the want of intelligence among the boasted six millions of *loyal* subjects. Scotland, with a population of about a million and a half, had at the same period eight; besides the regular circulation of the London

journals, of which very few indeed ever found their way to Ireland.

The Irish papers in general afford distressing evidence of the low state of the art of printing in that kingdom. The paper is in some so coarse, and the impression of the types so imperfect, that it is often difficult to peruse them correctly. And then the arrangement of the different kinds of intelligence beggars all description. It is no uncommon circumstance to see the account of an outrage "received by express"—that is, by some lazy carman, who with his horse has travelled to town at the rate perhaps of three Irish miles per hour,—inserted between two advertisements. Then there is the leading article printed with *pica*, a type used in printing sermons in this country; and preferred in Ireland, perhaps, to make errors more conspicuous, although probably for the more laudable purpose of rendering the writer's meaning more intelligible. Even in Dublin some of the papers look ghastly in the extreme. The rags of daily morning papers might be passable enough in France, but they reflect little credit on a people so intimately allied to

Britain. They may be read from beginning to end in half an hour without the aid of spectacles. The advertisements appear to be printed with a tenacious adherence to the manuscript; for they abound with errors of the most glaring description. Upon the whole, there are not above six papers published in the kingdom, that, whether as regards literary merit, or workmanship, are deserving of the smallest praise. These are The Dublin Evening Post, The Dublin Evening Mail, The Correspondent, Warder, The Patriot, and Cork Constitution; which last, although a provincial one, is, to the shame of Dublin, more elegantly printed than any other journal in Ireland.

The manner of conducting an Irish journal is likewise different from that pursued on this side the Channel. An editor is there supposed to be more or less perfect in his profession, in proportion as he is more or less conversant with polemics. To shine there, he must have the names of all the popes and saints, from St. Peter downwards, on his finger-ends; and must be able to give the date of every bull, miracle, and indul-

gence, that is to be found in the musty records of the last thousand years. Political knowledge, scientific knowledge—every sort of knowledge but religious knowledge,—is unsaleable in the Irish market. The distinctions of Whig and Tory are there unknown. All divisions common to this country, and which originate in the conflicting views of political combinations, are there sunk in that of *Protestant* and *Catholic*. Every other feeling gives way to those which these omnipotent words produce. It is of little moment whether you generally vote with the Ministers or not—you are less than nothing in Ireland if you do not take a decided part in this question. It regulates every thing. It draws to a hair's-breadth the exact limits of domestic society. It enters the assembly-room; it selects with the most scrupulous pertinacity the number and the character of the company; it even regulates their dress; it directs their feasts; it restricts their viands; it prescribes their toasts; and is the active and moving principle, by which every public and private act is guided. In other coun-

tries, and especially in England, men of opposite sentiments, in all the gradations of society, are frequently to be found together, and zealously aiding each other to promote the public good. But there is no such harmonious patriotism in Ireland. There is sometimes an appearance of cordiality; but there is no heart and no substantiality in it. It is distrust in the assumed form of confidence—it is jealousy shaking hands with friendship. The *Protestant* and the *Catholic* stand as far separate from each other, so far as regards the mutual interest of both, as if an ocean rolled between them, and as if the prosperity of the one would endanger the success of the other;—for this reason, that the religious establishments from which the power and supremacy of the former are derived, are obnoxious and insurmountable barriers in the way of the latter. These are hateful eye-sores to the Catholic. They stand betwixt him and his hopes. They retard all his motions; while the duration of their existence, and of the power and influence they confer, is regarded as the hopeless

period of Ireland's degradation. The halcyon days are to come, when these establishments are overthrown.

The Press of Ireland, therefore, may be considered as devoted to little else than ringing changes upon the religious discords of the country. That is its vocation. The publishers of newspapers might shut their shops, if their conductors did not give the rein to their passions on these subjects. And the medley of combatants in these theological, or rather ecclesiastical disputes, is ludicrous enough. It is no uncommon circumstance to hear the purity of the Church of Rome, and the conduct of its clergy, warmly defended by a Protestant dissenter. In fact, it is notorious in Dublin, that the leading oracle of the Catholic priesthood, from which issue all decrees, pastorals, and miracles—signed, sealed, *crossed*, and attested by some titular dignitary, as in duty bound,—is edited by a born and bred Protestant; the best declaimer, nevertheless, against his own principles of any in the kingdom. On the other hand, the cause of the Orangemen, the corporation, and

“the glorious and immortal memory,” is ardently espoused by a son of St. Peter, born in the bosom of mother Church, initiated by the virtues of holy spittle, and faithfully reared at the foot of the altar. Then there is the official journal of the Church, the property of the Bishops, written by a Methodist; while a few years ago, the most able advocate for the legality of “first fruits” and “tithes,” was an unassuming descendant of Mr. William Penn, Quaker and emigrant. A Scotch Presbyterian defends in one page the happy institutions of a federal republic; while, in the opposite one, he is equally warm in justification of pluralities. In short, it is not unusual to hear a barrister come fresh from the Five Courts,—where he has perhaps, for hours, done his utmost to work upon the passions and prejudices of a jury,—and publicly complain of the administration of justice: nor is it more so for a Catholic priest, after having attested the performance of a miracle; to go directly to his desk and reprobate the intolerant spirit of the age and the *credulity and bigotry* of the Dublin corporation!

Such is the metropolitan Press of Ireland. What it is in the country may be inferred from what it is in the capital. It is, however, a strange incident, that while newspapers are the only periodical publications of any kind that issue from the Irish Press, they should be of the description we have considered it our duty to notice. It is a fact, that there is not a quarterly or monthly publication, or indeed a literary or political work of any sort, printed throughout the kingdom. While every city or town of any note or considerable population in Britain has its review, or magazine, or miscellany of some kind or other, the sister Island cannot, with all its learning, wit, and “millions,” withal, boast of any such production. Its reading population cater their food from the more congenial soils of London and Edinburgh; and even of this they partake but sparingly. The consumption of reviews and magazines in Dublin is so limited as would scarcely be credited were we to state the amount of it. How this is accounted for it is difficult to state correctly. The poverty of the country is alleged by some, and

the deficiency of taste by others. Perhaps both causes operate. It is probable that the distress of the landowners, affecting as it does all classes of society in that country, tends in a great measure to expel from the mind that attention to fashionable literature, which, under happier circumstances, would occupy it. But it is *more* probable that the inclinations of the Irish gentry, and of the better educated classes, do not so strongly run in that way as do those of the English. Their gratifications are, perhaps, more corporeal, and less mental; and it is not unlikely they have a disposition, in the gloom of low prices, to sacrifice the enjoyments of the belles lettres for those of a more national kind. Instead of seeking consolation from the Muses—instead of dissipating sorrow with the sounds of Apollo's lute—of laughing away domestic grievances with Mr. Christopher North, or forgetting religious animosities in the visions of the Opium Eater, they trust too implicitly to the specifics of Dr. Kitchiner and the precocious dew-drops of the wilds of Conamara. They do homage, we suspect, to a god who never, or, at least, who seldom smiles upon genius but to blast it.

Be this correct or not, it is true that works of taste and literature are slovenly cultivated in the Emerald Isle. Men of science and talent are respected in a select circle, are welcomed to the hospitality of the fire-side, but meet with no encouragement from what is called the public. In fact, there is no educated public there. The affluent are so few in number, and the poor so many, and the distance between these so great, that what with cultivating the patronage of the one, and trusting to the support of the other, the sanguine speculator upon numerical strength soon finds himself miserably deceived. It is hard to say how long it will be before the peasantry of Ireland, or even her trades-people, make any approach to the happy condition, in point of intelligence and industry, of the same class of persons in this country. The truth is, there can scarcely be said to be any such sort of persons in Ireland. There are there few of those men who in England fill up the gap between the tradesman and his assistant, and the farmer and his labourer. There is no medium class, who can toil and who can read, who can

be servants to themselves, and can, at the same time, sit in the same club with the lawyer, talk with the clergyman upon his own studies, converse with the broker upon the price of stocks, and be a match for the best collector of taxes any day, in calculating the probable amount of the next quarter's revenue. There are no such men to be found out of the province of Ulster. All the "*people*" everywhere else are contented to know nothing further than how to raise potatoes for the winter, fatten the tythe pig, cheat the proctor, and how to go to mass without being obliged to go to confession. This is the unwearied routine of the lower orders. How, therefore, such orders can be made available, in the present state of information and discontent in that country, to any other purposes than those of rebellion at home or war abroad, is a question we will not here decide.

We have alluded to the late altercations of the Press in Scotland, and the fatal consequences to which they led. We cannot say, that high as party spirit has ever run in Ireland, it has produced rencounters of so distressing a kind. And yet cudgellings, and

horsewhippings, and various rude modes of resentment, for alleged insults in the public journals, are frequent in Dublin. The bickerings of contemporary editors are sometimes carried on in a strain of philippic, remarkable alike for offensiveness, and acrimonious but vulgar scurrility. There is a liveliness in a repartee which is pleasing. There is some life in a bloodless and spleenless contest between two casuists, which enlivens the regular dulness of such piping times as these; and we consider him out of his sphere who cannot, in a piquant manner, defend himself in polite language from the assaults or insinuations of his fellow journalist. We like to see these sights for the sake of the character of the nation. But what would decency say for us, were two of our London *stars* to bedaub one another in the following manner. In *one* article in a Dublin paper, which is published in recrimination upon a contemporary, we find the following epithets and sentences, which we extract in the order they stand:—

“O! foul and odious dunce!—God preserve the *wretch* from suicide!—political and moral monster!—the miscreant appears before us in all his hideous deformity—we

shall lay bare those limbs of the leprous carcase our pin-cers are to tear : wretch—criminal—COWARD—malignant viper—wretch — scoundrel — miscreant—a creature in whose very touch there is *contamination*—greedy and heartless speculator—base and detested man—villain—coward—miscreant—libeller—noxious reptile — calumniator — coward — LIAR — madman — HANGMAN-headed dog—unprincipled and despised man,” &c. &c.

To this in *one* article also the other replies :—

“ Poltroon of the true stamp—gigantic LIAR—vagabond—villain—wretch—libeller and villain—vagabond—the demoniacal—the obscene—the infamous—the profane—the filthy—the libelling and LYING and slanderous—villain unmasked and proved,” &c. &c.

This would have been bad enough in the reign of Charles the Second, when severity of reprehension was supposed to consist in a most profuse jumble of offensive terms. We are not sure, indeed, if what we have quoted does not outstrip any thing that disgraces the language of that licentious period. But to think that it should be printed in publications having an extensive circulation—which are read in the public rooms of every respectable town in the three kingdoms—to think that such terms should in this “ enlightened age,”—in the year 1823—be

applied by persons who affect to move in genteel society, and who must necessarily be conversant with the exterior of good manners, would be incredible were the language not in print and the papers before the public. And yet it is true that the journal from which we take the first excerpt is among the most respectable in Ireland—is spiritedly and independently conducted, and is in the possession of persons sensible and polite, and of estimable private worth. The latter is from a journal, a daily one, of considerable standing.

The business of reporting is as little understood or attended to as it is in Scotland. Occasionally, however, a display is made in this department, but the materials generally proceed from the several speakers. It is by no means uncommon in Dublin for barristers to report themselves; and were this universally practised there would, at least, be little fear of actions for scandalous misrepresentation. But these efforts are rare; and much that passes at the meetings of public bodies, which it would be desirable should obtain all the publicity possible, is never published.

CHAPTER XII.

It is somewhat inexplicable how the proprietors of newspapers, who so often influence public measures by means of the Press, do not devote some of its powers to the reformation and amelioration of their own trade. Is it to be supposed that in their intense anxiety for the public weal, they overlook their own interests?—that patriotism is stronger in their bosoms, than selfishness? It really would appear so; for while for several years the cry has been against *horse*, *leather* and *salt* taxes, not one syllable of complaint has come from them against taxes on paper, in the shape of excise, and taxes in the shape of stamp duty, and taxes on advertisements, and various other direct and indirect imposts, fines, risks, securities in case of treason and sedition, &c. that all press most

powerfully and injuriously upon them, their wives and families.

It not unfrequently happens, that persons who set about reforming the Constitution, begin their pious work at the wrong end. They never think that there are evils worthy their attention, which form no part of the Constitution, which public exigencies called into being, and which ought, in fair dealing towards the public, to be removed, now that these exigencies are at an end. The trade of the country flourishes—our prosperity is progressive and universal—many burdens have been removed, many little sources of grievance have been lopped off, and the mechanic and the labourer, not only are able to earn the necessities, but likewise many of the luxuries of life. The merchant and the agriculturist are both prosperous. The Periodical Press alone is crushed to the earth with enormous and unnecessary imposts and restrictions—imposts and restrictions which justice and sound policy equally condemn.

Why should this be, when the finances of the country are so exuberant and redundant?

Why should newspapers, in a free country like this, be subjected to taxation so disproportioned to the taxation that bears upon any other article of such extensive consumption? One of two inferences must be drawn from this situation of the Press, namely, that the tax upon newspapers is a tax imposed for the sake of revenue, and if so, we contend it is beyond all proportion exorbitant; — or it is imposed, as well for the sake of revenue, as for the purpose of *restraint*, in which latter case, it is as unwise and impolitic, as it is arbitrary and unconstitutional.

But viewing the matter as it is, and exculpating Ministers from any design of restraining the Press, or making it subservient to their measures, which they are well aware they cannot do entirely—exculpating Ministers, we say, from any such imputation as they have a fair right to be, when the matter has not yet been brought before them, let us see how the case stands in relation to the stamp laws.

These laws in other commercial and trading transactions upon any bill, draft, note, receipt, or bond, do not affect the article transferred or

sold to a greater extent upon its value than *one half per Cent.* at the most. In the article of wool—cotton-wool for instance—the duty upon the wool, taken in conjunction with different duties upon the different bills of exchange, which are, on an average, negotiated in the regular transference of that wool from the grower to the consumer, does not amount to above ten per cent. upon the value of the raw material, and to less than one quarter per cent. upon the value of the manufactured article. In law papers the stamp duties are heavy, perhaps exorbitantly and unfairly so; but they are the lightest evils that bear upon the parties, so unfortunately involved. It is not so with newspapers—the duty is the greatest burden. On them it reaches somewhere about *one hundred and thirty per cent.* In addition to this there is the duty upon advertisements, which in four cases out of five, gives 3*s.* 6*d.* to Government upon an article that yields to the publisher only 2*s.* 6*d.* in London, and rarely more than 1*s.* 6*d.* in the country. The stamp is 3½*d.* exclusive of the excise; the paper is purchased, and with these burdens on it, it has to be printed and published

at the price of sixpence to the news agent, and seven-pence to the casual buyer ; so that after making allowance for the cost of the materials used, the loss of stamps, and the usual risks of trade, the publisher has scarcely more than *three farthings* per sheet to pay the interest of his capital, and provide for his family.

These facts show the crushing nature of the burthens to which the public journals are subjected. The tax is paid by the consumer, we admit, as in other taxes, to the full extent of the consumption ; but is it not possible to tax an article so heavily that consumers will abandon it ? The tax, therefore, while it operates on the one hand against the manufacturer, or the publisher, as in this instance, operates also directly against the interests of the public revenue. In this way, and from this cause, the business is monopolized, its resources are diminished, and the aspect of public affairs is viewed through a circumscribed and distorted medium. Opinions are suited to the narrow circle they move in ; men write to *please*, and not to *convince* their readers ; for reasoning is a fruitless and unnecessary formality where no opponent comes in contact, and

where his defence could not even be heard were it made.

It is true that newspapers are conveyed throughout the Kingdom postage free, and that a certain portion of the revenue derived from them, ought to be deducted for that purpose. But even this dear-bought advantage is any thing but an equitable one. Why should the town reader pay for the accommodation of the country one? It would be much better to impose a slight postage upon newspapers sent by mail, and deduct the amount of it from the gross amount of the stamp duty. If the present amount of revenue is intended to be kept up, this alteration ought at once to be conceded. This postage-free transmission of newspapers is termed, absurdly enough certainly, a bounty in favour of the London papers; but if it be a bounty, if it be a favour, why are not other periodicals equally favoured at the same cost? There are surely but slender grounds for affording encouragement to the lesser and lighter fry of literary works—compiled pamphlets, and semi-critical publications of no political complexion, especially when it is so obvious that

these do not contribute more, or even so much to the amusement or instruction of the lieges, as do the regular daily and weekly journals. Why should a publication that *forms* and circulates the news of the day—that quotes the market lists, and the prices of stocks—that announces the births, marriages, and deaths—the accidents that happen, the crimes that are committed, and the executions that take place, be subjected to a heavier tax than one, more voluminous perhaps, but at the same time fraught with the same sort of intelligence—the same advertisements—the same commercial lists, and the same obituary? Magazines pay but a trifling duty; and the smaller race of literary pamphlets, that are hawked and puffed in a thousand various ways, pay no duty at all. This is for the encouragement of literature—is it? These serve to instruct and enlighten the poor—do they?

The apology is that these works are pressed with a very light duty, in order to encourage literature, and diffuse harmless and useful information! But among whom do they diffuse this information? Not certainly among the middling or lower classes of society—not among

farmers, not among mechanics, not among manufacturers of any kind. A discovery, or an improvement in the arts, is seldom if ever communicated to those who avail themselves of it through the channel of a high-priced Magazine. On the contrary, such information is first conveyed through the newspapers. The encouragement given to these works is therefore a direct bounty in favour of the literature, and the entertainments of the affluent. This class alone patronise and support such works; their sale is exclusively confined to persons in the fashionable and opulent circles, and any valuable information that they contain is abridged and retailed to the poorer part of the community, by the more expensive mode of the daily and weekly journals. Why encourage literature, therefore, on such unfair terms, and give a bonus to the publishers of Magazines, and pamphlets of every description, at the expense and to the detriment of the publishers of newspapers?

But it is a mistaken notion that these pamphlets and monthly or quarterly periodicals are *harmless*. Such works as the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews do not, we admit, come into

contact with the multitude so directly as do the newspapers; and therefore the supposed good or evil tendency of the violent political disquisitions which they occasionally contain, is considered quite innocuous. This is so erroneous that the slightest attention to the subject must convince any one, that not only are the contents of these leading works instantly published in the newspapers, but the selection is such that the more irritating and excitable parts are first transferred, through this medium, without the advantage of being connected with those other parts which might be considered to act as an antidote to the former. It is true that newspapers are the vehicles of this. But will it be contended that a sort of bounty is to be given to encourage the political discussions of these Reviews, for the instruction and entertainment of the rich, and that a tax is to be imposed upon daily and weekly publications to prevent such discussions from being disseminated among the poor? The idea is so anti-constitutional that no person can conceive it for a moment, without being convinced of the injustice which it bears upon the face of it. If works of science are

thought entitled to a bounty, let them be exclusively works of science; and they ought to be published in such a way that the benefits of the information they contain may be conferred equally on all ranks of society; for so long as excerpts are allowed to be taken from such periodicals without restraint, or from foreign works of eminence, the humblest mechanic, to whom these excerpts frequently convey valuable information, ought to be permitted the perusal of them through a medium as free from taxation, as that through which our nobility and gentry are indulged with it, in the first instance.

But these more respectable Reviews and Magazines, however much they contribute to the political dissensions of the State, are not so hurtful, if hurtful at all, in a moral point of view, as those numerous non-descript pamphlets which are so abundant in London, and are becoming more common in the populous parts of the country. They seldom exceed four or eight pages at most, and appear, in imitation of religious tracts, as political, moral, and immoral tracts. They are most industriously hawked about town and country, and in some places are

circulated more extensively than many of the regular newspapers. It is a fact that there are not less than a hundred and fifty thousand of these tracts sold weekly in London, not a few of which contain specimens of moral sentiment of a very equivocal and spurious kind, as well as extracts from foreign and British authors, which, however suitable to the taste, are by no means adapted to the habits and limited education, of the class of persons who peruse them. In Manchester and Glasgow, and the other large manufacturing towns, these works are now familiar to the mechanics, and are greedily read, because they are cheap, and in some measure pushed upon their attention by the numerous tract-itinerants that are to be met with in every street of almost every town and village in the United Kingdom.

Politics, we confess, form no part of the contents of these pamphlets, but is it the political creed alone around which a defensive tax is to be thrown?—is this the only creed which the Government thinks worth preserving from taint? Is there not a moral as well as a religious creed, that is liable to hazard from the effects of such

productions?—We submit there is—and one, which, if undermined, will entail upon this nation consequences fatal to her repose and her prosperity. Political fanaticism is bad—but religious fanaticism—religious indifference—the extremes of sentimentality—the doctrines of friar Hayes and Richard Carlile, are infinitely worse. The former proceeds from the newspaper Press, the latter from that which, so far from being taxed, receives an indirect bounty from the enormous imposts on other publications, under the specious and imposing pretence of affording encouragement to literature and the arts and sciences.

But taking the most favourable view of the subject, and granting that but a few of these unstamped works are dangerous, and that many of them are of great utility, could not the newspaper Press perform all the instructive and philanthropic duties of the latter, were it relieved from the present exorbitant duties? The increase of daily and weekly journals, would, with the reduction in their price, and their increased consumption, enable proprietors to turn their attention more immediately to subjects of science

and literature. They would then be able to remunerate the exertions of men of genius, and afford their readers a share of those peculiar excellencies which at present are only to be culled in periodicals of a different description. Under the present regulations they have not the means of employing or compensating contributors; they really cannot afford to pay for articles of merit. It requires all the cant and puffing imaginable, to realise even a very limited profit. They have to flatter the counterfeit attainments and pamper the frauds of every quack and imposter to gain a living. They have therefore nothing to spare to encourage works of fancy or criticism. But this would not be the case, were the taxes, which bear upon newspapers, repealed or modified.

We are so much impressed with the truth of these deductions, that we are surprised that proprietors of newspapers have not ere now had recourse to those means which the constitution affords them of obtaining some adequate redress from the legislature. The exorbitant imposts under which their trade struggles, which so vitally cramp their prosperity; and which, as

they affect the public, are equally grievous and impolitic—*ought* to be removed. If these imposts can be defended on the score of expediency, on the ground of morality, or what is nearly of as much importance, on the ground of revenue, so far so well. But let us hear the defence—let the subject be fairly investigated. On the moral consequences of extending the influence of the press, little need be said, as experience has undoubtedly established the fact, that the Press, and the Press alone, can correct its own errors and abuses. As to any objection which might emanate from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, we trust we have exhibited pretty good data for believing that the removal or modification of the burdens, instead of proving hurtful to the public income would actually augment it. If it be said that such a measure would open a wider field for the display of the political incendiary, and give ampler scope to the intrigues of the disaffected, we deny the proposition. We say these men are not only *not* prevented by the present laws, but poor as their profession is, even independent of advantages which monopoly gives to them, they are as active, as fearless,

and as vehement as they would be, though every tax that presses upon them were repealed.

But admitting, for the sake of argument, that an addition would be made to the array of democratic journals, and that new and more obstinate and more unprincipled writers, would lift the pen, we say—let them. If there be such men abroad let us know them—let us ascertain the materials they are made of. Mr. Canning once observed that the House of Commons is, of all public assemblies in the kingdom, the most effectual in silencing mere declaimers. Such gentlemen soon find themselves out of their native element in that House; for however lofty may be their conceptions out of doors, or however electrifying may be their eloquence upon their particular species of partisans, they no sooner become members of Parliament than they have the mortification of finding themselves overawed, out-distanced, and outshone; their popular flights listened to with indifference, and their fiery tirades, that used to command the shouts of the crowd, treated with scorn. As with the demagogue in the House of Commons, so with the demagogue of the newspapers. He

would soon find his level—he would soon discover that the law is more potent than he; his fury would soon be tranquillized, and he would learn from bitter personal experience, what many men of similar feelings and aspirations have learned before, that it is a very different thing to be the orator of a corporation, of a provincial hustings, or a city club, and be the orator of Parliament, or the Aristarchus of the literary world

We do not mean to contend that any additional tax ought to be imposed on pamphlets; we only mean to argue that newspapers should partake of some of the advantages which these enjoy. It ought to be of some consideration with the Government to know that newspapers are liable to risks from the Six Acts, and especially from that one which enjoins the names of each and every proprietor, share-holder, printer, and publisher of a newspaper to be registered at the Stamp Office, and that such registration shall be held as conclusive against the parties in law, for the consequences of all actions for libel which may be brought, so long as these names are not withdrawn. This act prevents all sub-

terfuge on the part of printers, and others concerned, and consequently they run greater hazard in the event of prosecutions, than do the more obscure, and generally less respectable printers and publishers of the lower and cheaper class of pamphlets we have mentioned. This superiority, even under the amendments we suggest, would still continue, thereby shifting into better and more responsible hands the profits of such works, provided that the abrogation of the stamp duty should give advantages to this department, and inducements to newspaper establishments to embark in it, which are not possessed at present. It would be more expedient that the pamphlet traffic were more limited; but should this not be effected by the measures we advise, at least a share of it would be thrown into the hands of the proprietors of newspapers, who, for the reasons we have stated above, are infinitely more responsible, and less likely to abuse it, than the persons who at present carry it on so extensively.

A LIST OF STAMPS ISSUED FOR NEWSPAPERS IN 1821.

An Account of the Number of Stamps issued for Newspapers for the year 1821 ; distinguishing the London from the Provincial Newspapers, and distinguishing the different London Newspapers, and the Amount of Duty received from each ; ordered by the House of Commons to be printed the second day of May, 1822.

LONDON NEWSPAPERS. 1821.	Number.	Duty.
DAILY.		£ s. d.
British Press ; with Globe	777,500	12,958 6 8
British Traveller	81,575	1,359 11 8
Courier	1,594,500	26,575 0 0
Morning Advertiser ; with Sunday Advertiser	970,000	16,166 13 4
Morning Chronicle	990,000	16,500 0 0
Morning Herald.....	875,000	14,583 6 8
Morning Post.....	630,500	10,508 6 8
New Times.....	846,000	14,100 0 0
Public Ledger.....	430,500	7,175 0 0
Star.....	410,073	6,834 11 0
Statesman ; with Constitution..	239,150	3,985 16 8
Sun	170,000	2,833 6 8
The Times ; with Evening Mail.	2,684,800	44,746 13 4
Traveller ; with Commercial and London Chronicle	386,500	6,441 13 4
True Briton	165,600	2,760 0 0

LONDON NEWSPAPERS. 1821.		Number.	Duty.		
THREE TIMES A WEEK.			£	s.	d.
English Chronicle	160,500	2,675	0	0	
General Evening Post	150,000	2,500	0	0	
St. James's Chronicle; with Baldwin's Journal.....	577,500	9,625	0	0	
London Packet	202,000	1,700	0	0	
TWICE A WEEK.					
Courier de Londres	22,500	375	0	0	
WEEKLY.					
THE OBSERVER*	757,000	12,733	6	8	
Bell's Weekly Dispatch	132,250	2,204	3	4	
Bell's Weekly Messenger*	522,700	8,711	13	4	
British Luminary	52,500	875	0	0	
British Neptune*; with British Freeholder, British Mercury, London Moderator, London and Provincial Gazette, National Register*, and Norwich Courier	36,000	600	0	0	
Brunswick	22,392	373	4	0	
Catholic Advocate.....	18,545	309	1	8	
Champion	30,070	501	3	4	
Examiner*	141,975	2,366	5	0	
Guardian	82,150	1,469	3	4	
John Bull*	468,002	7,800	0	8	
John Bull's British Journal	2,000	33	6	8	
London Gazette.....	160,000	2,666	13	4	
*News	506,500	8,441	13	4	
Nicholson's Price Current	7,400	123	6	8	
Observer of the Times	55,150	919	3	4	
Real John Bull	77,568	1,292	16	0	
Wooler's British Gazette	66,500	1,108	6	4	
Aurora Borealis.....	24,600	410	0	0	
Bell's Price Current	10,000	166	13	4	
British Monitor	25,075	417	18	4	
Christian Reporter	24,650	410	16	8	
Cobbett's Register.....	825	13	15	0	
County Chronicle; with County Herald	226,500	3,775	0	0	
County Literary Chronicle	1,500	25	0	0	

LONDON NEWSPAPERS.
1821.

	Number.	Duty.		
		£	s.	d.
WEEKLY.				
Englishman; with Mirror of the Times	137,750	2,295	16	8
Farmer's Journal	155,000	2,583	6	8
Independent Observer	36,386	614	8	8
Law Chronicle	11,100	185	0	0
Literary Gazette	60,197	1,003	5	8
Marwade's Price Current	1,099	18	6	4
Military Register	1,672	27	17	4
Mirror	9,000	150	0	0
Philanthropic Gazette	36,900	615	0	0
Sunday Monitor; with Imperial Gazette	62,500	1,041	13	4
Town Talk	3,000	50	0	0
ONCE A FORTNIGHT.				
Racing Calendar	24,400	406	13	4
ONCE IN THREE WEEKS.				
Police Gazette	30,000	500	0	0
ONCE A MONTH.				
Literary Advertiser	6,000	100	0	0
Total number of London Papers.	16,254,534	270,908	18	0
Provincial Newspapers	8,525,252	142,087	10	8
Total number of Newspaper Stamps issued	24,779,786	412,996	8	8

A. R. BARKER, Pro. Compr.

Comptroller's Office, Stamps, April 19, 1822.

Those marked thus (*) also print a Monday's Edition.

From Montreal Pilot of 12 Oct 1847
No of Periodicals in G. B. Daily & to the
555 - in U. S. 2000 - Being 3 times as
as in E. I. W. S. & more than in all the world
besides -

See Quebec Gazette 18 Oct 1847. on Subj: Pre



PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

PN
5117
P5

The periodical press of
Great Britain and
Ireland

